University of Alberta

The Missing Voice in Canadian Immigration: Adaptation Experiences and Identity Negotiation of Preadolescent Chinese Children

by

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Canada

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to

My beloved parents

Lo Kwok Kwong and Yu Mei Oi

In Memory of

My paternal grandfather Lo Tin,

My maternal grandfather Yu Ling Hong,

and

Auntie Judy.

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The experience of carrying out this research has been invaluable to me. It is with sincere appreciation that I acknowledge the many individuals who made this work possible.

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE 1
Introduction 1
Review of the Literature 2
Immigration to Canada 3
Immigration and Stress 3
Studies on Immigration and Adaptation in the Adult Population 4
Immigration and Adaptation in the Young Immigrant Populations 6
Studies on Young Immigrants' Adaptation 9
The Case of Chinese Immigrants in Canada 10
The Need for the Perspective of Middle Childhood Chinese Immigrants 13
Summary 16

CHAPTER TWO 17
Method and Procedures 17
The Descriptive and Exploratory Approach 17
Sampling and Sample 17
Procedures 20
Data Collection 22
Data Analysis 23
Ensuring Rigour 25
Ethical Issues 26
Role of the Researcher 28

CHAPTER THREE 34
Results 34
Pre-Immigration 35
Emotions and Expectations 35
On Arrival 38
First Impressions of Canada 38
Adaptation 39
Language 39
Connecting with Canadian Peers 46
School 50
Post-Immigration Family Life 59
Today: Looking Back and Looking Ahead 66
Comparisons of Life in the Two Countries 66
Perceived Cultural Differences 71
Ups and Downs of Adaptation 82
Summary: Their Overall Journey 91
Making Sense of the Experience: Negotiation of a Changing Identity 92
Ethnic Identity 93
Fluidity of Identity 100
Self-Evaluation 104
Summary: Their Identity Negotiation 106

CHAPTER FOUR **109**
Discussion and Conclusion **109**
Overview of Findings 110
The Adaptation Experience of Chinese Immigrant Children 113
Personal and Contextual Variables 113
Adaptation Experience 116
Significance of Adaptation 126
Identity 131
Components of Ethnic Identity 132
Fluidity of Identity 135
Completing the Picture: Adaptation and Identity Development 140
Limitations **142**
Implications **143**
Conclusion **146**

References **147**

Appendix A **170**
Appendix B **173**
Appendix C **176**
Appendix D **179**
Appendix E **181**
Appendix F **183**
Appendix G **185**

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Immigration presents tremendous and multifaceted challenges. Immigrants and their children constitute a population at high risk of mental health problems due to the stress associated with migration and subsequent acculturation (Aronowitz, 1984). Immigrant children, in particular, face unique challenges – most notably, balancing the cultural values and behaviour expected of children in their home country with the expectations of those of their new country (Hanvey, 2000).

Although all immigrants face common challenges in resettling to a new environment, new immigrant populations are heterogeneous, with differences in culture, language, socio-economic status, and the context of immigration exerting differential effects on immigrants' mental health (Beiser, Hou, Hyman, & Tousignant, 1998). In comparison to other ethnic groups, evidence suggests that acculturative stress is most relevant and severe for first-generation Asian immigrants because of the conspicuous cultural disparity between Asian and Western cultures (Roysircar-Sodowsky & Maestas, 2000). The culture clash many Chinese immigrant children encounter between the family home and the outside world can therefore be highly stressful and may put these children at risk of experiencing significant difficulties following immigration (Huang, Ying, & Arganza, 2003; Lung & Sue, 1997).

Although immigrant children represent the fastest growing component of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2003), the recent literature on immigrant children in Canada is extremely sparse (Beiser et al., 1998; Kirova, 2001; Kobayashi,

Moore, & Rosenberg, 1998; B. K. Lee & Chen, 2000). What is known to date about their actual adaptation patterns remains incomplete and fragmentary (L. C. Lee & Zhan, 1998). Even less is known about the subjective aspects of the children's experience as processed within their phenomenal field, or what Rumbaut (1994) has referred to as the "crucible within" (p. 752). The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the lives and adaptation experiences of preadolescent Chinese immigrant children in Canada who immigrated within the last three to five years with their families, from their unique perspectives. Understanding the experiences of these immigrant children and helping them to cope with the associated stress will be key to ensuring their healthy development and integration into all spheres of Canadian society.

This thesis will begin with a review of the literature so as to provide a background for the study. Chapter two provides a description of the research method and procedures, concerns with rigour, ethical issues, and the role of the researcher in this study. Chapter three presents the study's major findings. The final chapter, Chapter four, includes a discussion of the findings in light of the present literature, as well as the limitations and implications of the study.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of the literature review is to summarize the current state of knowledge regarding immigration and its effects on children and, in pointing to the limitations in that knowledge, put forth the need to investigate the perspectives of the immigrant children themselves. The section will begin with an overview of immigration and its associated stressors for both the adult and child populations. The special needs of

minority immigrants will then be discussed using as a case study the largest minority group in Canada – the Chinese. After a discussion of the limitations of the current research on Chinese immigrant children, especially those children in middle childhood, the literature review will conclude by proposing a qualitative study to gain a deeper understanding of these young immigrants' experiences.

Immigration to Canada

Canada is a country largely settled by immigrants. According to a 2001 census, five and a half million people residing in Canada, or 18.4% of the total population, were born outside of the country. Of these foreign-born individuals, almost two million were recent immigrants who arrived in Canada between 1991 and 2001, with 17%, or 309,700, being school children between the ages of 5 and 16 (Statistics Canada, 2003). At a time when the proportion of children in the Canadian population is at its lowest ever, the immigrant population is growing at its fastest in 70 years, making immigrant children a salient demographic in present day Canada (Ma, 2002). The primary sources of immigrants to Canada for the first 60 years of the past century were the United States and European nations. In contrast, between 1991 and 2001, Asian immigrants accounted for 62% of the total immigrant population (Statistics Canada).

Immigration and Stress

Although most immigrant families adapt to their new environments successfully, resettlement stories with happy endings are far from universal (Beiser, Hou, Hyman, & Tousignant, 2002). Migration can produce profound psychological distress, even among "the best prepared and best motivated and even under the most receptive of circumstances" (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, p. 154). Immigrants often feel pressured to

learn new ways to think, feel, and behave so that they can attain membership in the new country (B. K. Lee & Chen, 2000). Stress reactions are common responses during the cross-cultural transition from one cultural context to another (Lazarus, 1997).

Any discussion of the stress of resettlement inevitably touches on the process of reconciling cultural differences between the values people bring with them and the values they encounter in the new country (Beiser, 1999). This psychosocial reconciliation, often involving discrepant beliefs, practices, behaviours, and values, has been conceptualized as the acculturation process (Berry, 1997; Lieber, Chin, Nihira, & Mink, 2001). The stresses that immigrants face during the process of acculturation, often referred to as acculturative stress, are pervasive and impact the physical, psychological, and social well-being of the acculturating individuals (Alaggia, Chau, & Tsang, 2001). A brief summary of studies in this area follows.

Studies on Immigration and Adaptation in the Adult Population

In recent years, research on the new wave of immigrants to North America since the 1960s has largely been dominated by studies of foreign-born, first-generation adults (Kobayashi et al., 1998; Kuo, 2002; B. K. Lee & Chen, 2000; Rumbaut, 1994). The process of immigration removes immigrant adults from many of their relationships and from a predictable context, including communities, jobs, customs, and often language (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). These changes in relationships, context, and roles are highly disorienting and inevitably lead to stress.

The long-term psychological consequences of this process of acculturation are highly variable, depending on social and personal variables that reside in the society of origin, the society of settlement, and phenomena that exist prior to, and arise during, the

course of acculturation (Berry, 1997). Researchers have linked factors such as gender (Ritsner, Ponizovsky, Nechamkin, & Modai, 2001; Tang & Dion, 1999), socio-economic status (Ataca & Berry, 2002; Ying, 1988), marital status and level of education (Aroian, Norris, Patsdaughter, & Tran, 1998; Ying, 1996), and age of migration (Garcia Coll & Magunson, 1997; Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987; Padilla, Alvarez, & Linhdholm, 1986; Sam & Berry, 1995; Scott & Scott, 1989; Seat, 2003) to psychological outcomes arising from immigration. The predominant focus of the literature, however, has been on the acculturation strategies that immigrants adopt.

Acculturation strategies.

The work of Berry and his colleagues (e.g., Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Berry, 1999) has shown that, for immigrants in multicultural societies such as the United States or Canada, acculturation is a bidimensional process in which individuals in the process of acculturation face two general issues: (a) to what extent to maintain their original cultural identity and characteristics, and (b) to what extent to participate in the larger host society. Four styles of acculturation, in response to these issues, have been identified: (1) assimilation – rejection of the original cultural identity in lieu of participation in the larger society; (2) integration/biculturalism – simultaneous retention of original cultural identity and participation in the larger society; (3) separation – maintenance of original cultural identity and rejection of participation in the larger society; and (4) marginalization – rejection of both original cultural identity and participation in the larger society (B. K. Lee & Chen, 2000; Tang & Dion, 1999).

In this bidimensional view of acculturation, immigrants' increasing identification with the new culture does not necessarily require decreasing identification with their

original culture (B. K. Lee & Chen, 2000). Beiser (1999) points out that successfully adapting immigrants continue to value their heritage as much as do those who are encountering difficulties, the difference being that well-adjusted individuals are more willing or able to incorporate the larger culture into their everyday lives. Consistent with Beiser's position, the line of research conducted by Berry and his colleagues (e.g., Berry et.al., 1989; Berry, 1999) assessing the acculturation strategies of various immigrant groups in North America has demonstrated that integration is the most psychologically adaptive pattern. In other American and Canadian studies (e.g., Lieber et al., 2001; Tang & Dion, 1999), integrated or bicultural individuals experienced less acculturative stress and anxiety and manifested fewer psychological problems.

Immigration and Adaptation in the Young Immigrant Populations

Since the 1980s, immigrant children have become the fastest growing and most ethnically diverse segment of America's child population (Zhou, 1997). These children will make up an increasing proportion of Canada's population in the future (Kobayashi et al., 1998). Researchers have pointed out a critical gap between the emergence of these young immigrants and the lack of knowledge about their health and well-being (Beiser et al., 1998, 2002; Kuo, 2002; Zhou). The available research has suggested various sources of stress for young immigrants, including language problems, separation from former social networks, loneliness, feelings of being different from majority peers, readjustment to changes in family functioning, perceived discrimination, and perceived cultural incompatibilities (Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998; B. K. Lee & Chen, 2000; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Of these stressors, perceived cultural incompatibilities, family

conflicts, and loneliness have received consistent research attention and will be briefly discussed next.

Perceived cultural incompatibilities.

The process of migration usually entails great stress for child immigrants, who face the difficult task of adapting to a new culture during a developmental period of rapid change (Leondari, 2001). A dilemma these immigrant children often face is over the extent to which their own system of values, beliefs, and behaviours should match that of the host culture or that of their original culture. The process of acculturation requires immigrant children to navigate their way in both mainstream culture and the culture of their parents, a navigation necessarily involving complex interaction between the child and the family, the child and the host society, and the family and the host society (Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997; B. K. Lee & Chen, 2000). This process puts immigrant children in a difficult double-bind: if they maintain their cultural heritage, they risk greater discrimination and alienation from the host society; if they abandon their cultural heritage, they risk alienation and rejection from family and friends, with no guarantees of acceptance from the new country (Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998). When left without a sense of cultural competence, control, and belonging, a keen sense of loss and disorientation often results for these young immigrants (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Family conflicts.

One of the greatest difficulties involved in having a dual frame of reference is the intergenerational-intercultural problems it creates. Most children and their parents, immigrant and non-immigrant alike, face generational conflicts, simply because the parents and the children are socialized into different worlds in a temporal sense (Garcia

Coll & Magnuson, 1997). This generational conflict is more pronounced in immigrant families given that immigrant children usually adapt to the host culture at a faster pace than their parents do and, as a result, immigrant parents and their children are socialized into different worlds in a cultural sense as well (Chiu, Feldman, & Rosenthal, 1992; Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002; Hanvey, 2000; Zhou, 1997).

Furthermore, parents and children often adopt different acculturation strategies in that children are much more likely to become integrated than are their parents (Pawliuk et al., 1996). If parents maintain their original cultural practices while their children become integrated, familial problems such as communication failures and lack of family support are likely to emerge (Baptiste, 1993). The psychological wellness of immigrant children may be jeopardized in the process, and a sense of loneliness may result insofar as these children feel rejected by their families (Gil & Vega, 1996; Rumbaut, 1994; Ying, 1999).

Loneliness.

Family conflicts can be highly stressful for immigrant children, especially when, for these children, family may represent the only source of comfort and familiarity, as life outside of the home seems alien and threatening. Furthermore, immigrant parents may be unaware of their children's psychological distress because of their own emotional states and experiences (Leondari, 2001). The result for immigrant children may be a feeling of intense loneliness. While the majority of children in Canada feel that they have someone to count on in times of crisis or when they need to make important decisions, recent young immigrants are less likely to say that they have someone in whom they can confide (Hanvey, 2000). Kirova's (2001) study of loneliness in Canadian immigrant children revealed feelings of being excluded, unwanted, and disliked by their peers. Such feelings

affect children's self-esteem and sense of self-worth (Murphy, 1986) and may further hamper their adaptation process.

Studies on Young Immigrants' Adaptation

The limited available research on young immigrants' adjustment has yielded inconsistent and sometimes conflicting findings (Beiser, Dion, Gotowiec, Hyman, & Vu, 1995). Some studies have suggested that young immigrants tend to experience emotional and behavioural difficulties. For example, Minde and Minde's (1976) study with Ugandan Canadian children found that close to one-third of the children reported experiencing loneliness and academic difficulties, and, by clinical standards, could be diagnosed as having a moderate-to-severe psychiatric disturbance. Other researchers have found that immigrant children and adolescents in North America often reported problems such as anxiety, stress, loneliness, low self-esteem, poor concentration, nervousness, loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, feelings of inadequacy, depression, anger, tension, identity crisis, and poor physical health (Baptiste, 1993; Evans & Lee, 1998; Kirova, 2001).

On the other hand, results from other studies suggest that the process of immigration has little impact on the adjustment and health of children, particularly when they immigrate at an early age (Berry, 1997; Fuligni, 1998; Huntsinger, Jose, & Larson, 1998). For example, Chiu et al.'s (1992) study in the United States and Australia showed that non-immigrant youth reported at least as many emotional and physical symptoms as did immigrant youth. Leondari's (2001) study in Greece showed that immigrant children did not differ from their host peers in terms of their self-perceptions or in terms of their feelings of loneliness and social competence. Using information from the National Longitudinal Survey on Youth and Children, researchers (Beiser et al., 1998; Ma, 2002)

concluded that immigrant children in Canada are, on the whole, at least as healthy, physically and mentally, as majority culture children and often outperform them in school. One possible explanation for the seemingly contradictory findings on the adjustment of immigrant children is that many of these studies did not differentiate between visible minority and non-visible minority immigrant children, who may have different migration experiences because of differences in their status in the country of settlement.

The Case of Chinese Immigrants in Canada

Canada was home to almost four million individuals who identified themselves as members of visible minority groups in 2001, accounting for 13.4% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2003). Chinese constituted the largest visible minority group in Canada, surpassing one million for the first time in 2001. They accounted for 3.5% of the total Canadian population and 26% of the visible minority population. The first major wave of Chinese immigration to Canada occurred during the late 1800s when Chinese laborers arrived in western Canada to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. Following the railway's completion, Chinese immigration was discouraged for decades. Since the 1970s, however, new waves of Chinese immigrants, largely from the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, have made the Chinese one of Canada's fastest growing visible minority populations (Li, 1998). According to the 2001 Census by Statistics Canada, the Chinese have become the largest group of immigrants in Canada and the Chinese language is the third most widely-spoken language in this country.

First-generation Chinese immigrants, like many other first-generation immigrants, struggle with a new system of values, norms, and behaviours, as well as with language

and social difficulties and a sense of loss due to being uprooted from their place of origin. Chinese culture, rooted in Confucian philosophy and embodied in a collective context for several thousand years, differs markedly from Western culture in their very definitions of a person, human development, family, and human relationships (Jose, Huntsinger, Huntsinger, & Liaw, 2000; Lam, 2001). For Chinese immigrants, the experience of adapting to a new country may therefore differ from that of other immigrants.

Cultural disparity.

According to the acculturative stress concept, resettlement demands rapid accommodation not only to physical changes but also to new cultural forms. The greater the discrepancy between the familiar and the new, and the more rapid the pace of change required, the greater the risk to an individual's mental health (Beiser, 1982). In accordance with this view, evidence suggests that acculturative stress is most relevant and severe for first-generation Asian immigrants, in comparison to other ethnic groups, because of the conspicuous cultural disparity between Asian and Western cultures (Lam, 2001; Roysircar-Socowsky & Maestas, 2000; Tung, 2000). For example, in R. M. Lee and Liu's (2001) study, Asian Americans reported the greatest likelihood of intergenerational family conflict when compared to their Hispanic and European American counterparts. Immigrant children are often less committed to or knowledgeable about the system of cultural practices of their country of origin (Chiu et al., 1992; Kao, 1999); Chinese immigrant children are therefore often "caught between a past that is puzzling to them and a present that they cannot live up to, be it Chinese or American style" (Tung, p. 10).

Visible minority status.

The visible minority status of Chinese immigrants in Canada further heightens the conflicts generated by the cultural disparity (Kao, 1999). In an attempt to explain the low levels of self-esteem and social competence that accompanied the high acculturation levels shown by the Asian immigrant children in their study, Pawliuk and her colleagues (1996) noted that even when the minority immigrant children have completely assimilated or integrated into Canadian society, they may never be completely accepted by members of the larger culture because they constitute a "visible minority." Thus, Chinese immigrant children are faced with an almost impossible situation: low self-esteem may follow if they reject their ethnic culture and assimilate to the larger one, yet the majority culture may never accept them because of their ethnicity.

Stereotypes of Chinese in North America.

Stereotypes of Chinese-Americans, or more generally, Asian-Americans, subject these individuals to significant stress, even though such stereotypes are generally positive. Chinese children, for instance, are often stereotyped as obedient and educationally successful (S. J. Lee, 1999; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). The "model minority" or "Asian whiz kids" image attributable to their outstanding academic achievement is supported by much research (Ho, 1994; Schneider, Heishima, Lee, & Plank, 1994). As noted by Spencer and Markstrom-Adams, the stress associated with living up to the "achieving Asian" social stereotype, along with parental pressures for excellence in school, may have a negative impact on the psychosocial development of Chinese immigrant children. Despite this model minority image, increasing concerns have arisen over the recent growth of Asian youth gangs and related criminal activities in

North America (L. C. Lee & Zhan, 1998). It is therefore important to understand the different immigration experiences that lead some Chinese immigrant children to live up to the model minority image, while others succumb to the Asian gang image and yet others live their lives between these two extremes.

The Need for the Perspective of Middle Childhood Chinese Immigrants

The neglected group.

The majority of the research in the area of immigrant adaptation has focused on the adult population, with research on the adolescent age group following closely behind. Researchers have paid relatively little attention to children in middle childhood (six to thirteen years of age), in comparison with the preschool and adolescent years in which it is usually presumed that more rapid and significant changes take place in children and their relations with their families (Hill, Laybourn, & Borland, 1996). Through a brief discussion of these children's developmental stage, and of acculturation rate and changes in parenting behaviours in Chinese parents during the middle childhood years, this section of the chapter will put forward the need to understand immigrant children's perspectives on their immigration experience during the middle childhood years.

The years of middle childhood are precisely the years when children go through dramatic changes in both physical and cognitive development. Research has demonstrated that the search for identity may start as early as middle school age (Phinney, 1989). A strong and stable sense of ethnic identity may facilitate the development of a positive self-image and help young immigrants cope with developmental and acculturative stress and provide an anchor in the vicissitudes of acculturation, easing the process for children (Florsheim, 1997; Guarnaccia & Lopez,

1998; Lieber et al., 2001). Indeed, researchers (e.g., Eyou, Adair, & Dixon, 2000; Lay & Verkuyten, 1999) have found a positive correlation between Chinese adolescent immigrants' ethnic identity and both their self-esteem and levels of integration into the new society. Ou and McAdoo (1999), after a review of several studies, have indicated that young Chinese children, regardless of the racial organization of the society in which they live, have unclear ethnic attitudes and showed less preference for their own race than did their Caucasian counterparts. It is therefore crucial to understand the factors that contribute to or inhibit the identity development process for Chinese immigrant children in middle childhood.

The impact of migration experience on first-generation children varies greatly according to the age or developmental stage of the child (Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997). Garcia Coll and Magnuson propose that the ease of acculturation is a curvilinear function of age, with the youngest and oldest children acculturating less quickly than children who arrive during the middle years of childhood. This can be accounted for in part in that preschool children have little exposure to institutions outside of the family while adolescents tend to be less malleable due to both their developmental stage and the greater duration of their exposure to the country of origin. Children who immigrate to a new country during the middle childhood years are therefore more likely than children in other age groups to adopt majority culture values; as a result, they are also at the greatest risk for family conflicts and negative mental health outcomes (Beiser et al., 1995).

Ho's (1986) analysis of Chinese parents' behaviours has shown that parenting style varies with the age of the child. Ho found that Chinese parents typically act in a sensitive way with their children before the age of six or seven years, but become stricter

thereafter. When this change in parenting behaviour coincides with migration, children in middle childhood, who often lack the cognitive capacity and knowledge that might help them to understand and integrate these changes engendered by migration, are left without an explanation for the sudden sharp contrast between the strict upbringing they receive and the prevalent mainstream image of warm and affectionate parents. In Sung's (1985) study of Chinese immigrant children in New York City, a commonly voiced concern among them was: "My parents do not love me. . . . They are so cold, distant, and remote" (p. 260). These children's formal and distant relationships with their parents may further heighten their sense of loneliness and jeopardize their well-being.

Emphasis on ends over the means.

Most of the studies in the area of immigrant adaptation and well-being are limited in that they are quantitative studies using measures developed and standardized on majority-culture families. Few in-depth qualitative studies have been carried out, especially with Chinese immigrant children, while measures developed specifically for this group of children are also very few. Reducing the adaptation experience of all immigrants to statistical aggregate figures tends to mask the diversity of experiences among immigrants from different ethnic backgrounds and age groups. By concentrating on academic performance and/or psychopathology, the few studies (e.g., Beiser et al., 1998; Ma, 2002; Minde & Minde, 1976; Pawliuk et al., 1996) that have analyzed immigrant children's adaptation outcomes imply that good grades and the absence of disorders are indexes of successful adaptation to Canadian society. In addition, the literature assumes that the end product is more important than the process and that experience can be compartmentalized through measurement without losing sight of the

immigrant experience as a whole (Polyzoi, 1985). To be meaningful, research must illuminate the process that immigrant children go through to achieve the observed outcomes and not merely see the children as a passive product of the immigration process (Igoa, 1995). Furthermore, inconsistencies in the results of these studies highlight the need to understand the experience of migration from the perspectives of these young immigrants themselves.

Summary

As an overall theme, this literature review has emphasized the need for an in-depth understanding of the adjustment process that Chinese immigrant children go through. It is important to understand the experience of these children through their own perceptions of their world, including how they view their own existence in this society, the degree of stress they experience, and what their perceptions are of the social supports within a social milieu in which they are a minority (L. C. Lee & Zhan, 1998). The goal of the present study was to explore and describe the lives and adaptation experiences of preadolescent Chinese immigrant children in Canada who immigrated within the last three to five years with their families, from their unique perspectives. To this end, the research question framing the current study was: "What is the experience of recent Chinese immigrant children as they go through the immigration process?" Special emphasis was given to the children's perceptions of their adaptation process, family and peer relationships, stressors and difficulties that accompanied migration, as well as their self-perceptions in this new country. The methods and procedures followed in the study undertaken to answer this question will be outlined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

Method and Procedures

This chapter will describe the research method used, the sampling strategy and sample, procedures in data collection and analysis, concerns with rigour, ethical issues, and the role of the researcher in this study.

The Descriptive and Exploratory Approach

A descriptive and exploratory approach was used in this qualitative study. Such an approach is the method of choice when little information about the topic is available in the literature and the topic is not sufficiently developed to use the quantitative method (Morse & Field, 1995; Patton, 1990). This approach corresponds to the exploratory purpose of this study and its commitment to provide an in-depth description of the adaptation experiences of Chinese children who are recent immigrants.

Sampling and Sample

The aim in qualitative sampling is to understand the phenomenon of interest, and therefore qualitative inquiry depends on samples selected purposefully (Mayan, 2001). Given that there was no existing sampling frame in this study, the initial recruitment was carried out through my own personal contacts. Recruitment posters, directed to both parents and children, asking interested families to contact me, were placed in community centres, churches, schools, and businesses. Participating children were also asked to refer other Chinese immigrant children who were in similar circumstances and might be interested in participating in the study. This combined outreach and snowballing strategy

was intended to ensure data appropriateness, the degree to which the sampling process selects participants who can best inform the research (Morse & Field, 1995).

To meet the inclusion criteria, the child must: have immigrated to Canada three to five years ago and be of Chinese heritage; currently be living with his/her parents, who must also be immigrants; understand and speak one or more of English, Mandarin, or Cantonese; currently be between the ages of nine and thirteen, and have had some schooling in the country of origin. It was assumed that the adaptation time frame of three to five years would be ideal for the purposes of this study. After such a period, the children and their families most likely would have passed through the initial feelings of euphoria and the acculturative stress and difficulties that often characterize immigrants' first two years in the new country (Committee on the Health and Adjustment of Immigrant Children and Families, 1998). At the same time, the experience itself would still be in the children's recent memory. The criterion regarding schooling in the country of origin was set to allow for discussions on differences between the school systems. This sampling procedure resulted in a sample size of 11 Chinese immigrant children from predominantly middle class families.[1] Table 1 shows the basic demographic information for this group of 11 participants.

[1] The socio-economic status of the participants' families was inferred on the basis of the parents' education level, the schools that the participants attended, and, above all, the middle-class neighbourhoods in suburban areas of the city in which most of the families resided.

Table 1

Basic Demographic Information of the Participants

	Number of Participants
Age	
9	2
10	3
11	1
12	2
13	3
Mean Age = 11.1	
Gender	
Female	6
Male	5
Place of Origin	
Mainland China	5
Hong Kong	6
Years in Canada	
3	2
4	3
5	6
Mean Years in Canada = 4.4	

Procedures

At the time of being contacted by a child or his/her parents, I first verified that the child met the inclusion requirements. They were then each given an information letter in both Chinese and English (Appendixes A, B, and C) at a time and place of their choice. The study was explained to them and their parents, and any questions that they had were answered. If the parent-child dyad was interested in participating, a time and place for the interview that was most convenient and comfortable for them was set. The children were also given the option of using English, Mandarin, or Cantonese for the interviews. Interviews for eight of the participants took place at the participant's home, while interviews for the other three took place at the University of Alberta. Ten of the children chose to use English for the interviews, and one chose Cantonese.

At the beginning of each interview, I provided an explanation of the procedures and obtained consent to participate in the study. I asked the parents to sign a consent form (Appendix D) for their child's participation. Participating children had the information letter read aloud to them and indicated their assent by signing the information letter. In both the parental and the children's information letters, information regarding the general nature of the study, the confidential, anonymous, and voluntary nature of involvement, participants' rights in the process, and information about me were provided. I reminded the children that they could stop the interview at any time, could choose not to have any or all parts tape-recorded, or could refuse to answer any or all questions. I also assured the participants that their responses would be held in strict confidence (the exception of disclosure of child abuse or of self-harm will be discussed later) and that, although some of the information they provided would appear in this thesis, their names would not be

mentioned or associated with the data. Upon completion of the interview, I thanked the participants, debriefed them in full, and gave them a gift certificate of ten dollars in value.

Establishing trust and rapport.

Both trust and familiarity are important for disclosure in studies with new immigrants (McQuiston & Flaskerud, 2003). Chinese children are traditionally socialized to be reserved, especially when interacting with outsiders (D. Y. H. Wu, 1996). For this study, my Chinese heritage, bilingual capability, and experience in working with children facilitated my entrance into the data collection process with the Chinese immigrant children. I dressed casually for the interviews so as to minimize any sense of age or power differential between the participants and myself. In speaking to them, I referred to what we were doing as "having a little chat" or "a friendly talk," rather than as "an interview." That is, I attempted to encourage a more informal atmosphere, as if I were a friend, rather than an adult conducting a study in connection with the university. The participants were free to sit down, lie down, stand, or walk around if they so desired.

The sensitive and personal nature of the immigration and adaptation experiences further highlights the importance of establishing rapport with the children (Kirova, 2001). A shared activity at the beginning of the session was used to help build rapport and increase both the amount and accuracy of the information provided (Boggs & Eyberg, 1990). A board game was chosen for this purpose, since board games are effective conversation starters with children in the middle childhood, often serving as a door for entering the lives of these children (Korova-Petrova, 2000; Sattler, 1992).

Translation of materials.

All participants and their parents were provided with informational materials and consent forms in both English and Chinese. Bilingual persons sensitive to the nuances and subtleties of English and Chinese carried out the translation of these materials as well as the interview guide and the Cantonese transcription. To ensure the accuracy of the translation, all materials were independently back-translated. Any differences that arose were reconciled among the research assistants, my supervisor, and myself.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviewing is used when the researcher knows something about the research topic, for example from a literature review, but not enough to know the answers to the research questions (Mayan, 2001). For this study, a semi-structured interview was employed to balance, on one hand, the need to allow immigrant children sufficient narrative space to articulate their experiences, and, on the other, the need for sufficient concrete information pertinent to the research question. Interview questions covered areas such as their adaptation process, family and peer relationships, perceived stressors, and self-perceptions. Fluent in both English and Cantonese, I conducted all of these one-on-one interviews myself.

The initial interview guide (Appendix E) was pretested with two Chinese immigrant children (one English-speaking child and one Cantonese-speaking child) for clarity, comprehension, and content in order to enhance its validity and reliability. I then revised the interview guide to make it more appropriate and credible. I conducted the interviews in a private setting where only the participating child and I were present. With the permission of the participants and their parents, I tape-recorded the interviews, lasting

40-80 minutes each. Field notes – a written account of the things that the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks during the course of data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) – were made following each interview. I also took note of any cultural or contextual issues so as to be in a better position to understand and interpret the content of the interview data.

Four of the 11 participants were followed up with a second interview to explore more in-depth some of the themes arising from the first interview. As Munhall (2001) points out, second interviews are helpful in that: (1) the participant may have additional reflections following the first interview and may desire to further elaborate on the experience; and (2) the first interview is often needed to establish trust and rapport with participants, ensuring the integrity of the information provided in the second interview. Based on both the dominant themes and gaps in the data that emerged from the first round of interviews, I developed a second interview guide (Appendix F), with input from my supervisor and committee members. In particular, it incorporated specific questions on identity issues, an area of interest and importance to the children that unexpectedly emerged from previous interviews. Those children who were included in the second round of interviews were those children who: (1) were able to articulate their stories well, and/or (2) had atypical or unique immigration experiences.

Data Analysis

All audiotapes recorded during the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The Cantonese transcript was translated into English and back-translated to ensure the accuracy of the translation. I carried out thematic content analysis simultaneously with

the data collection, guided by general methods of data analysis as described by Miles and Huberman (1994):

1. Initially, the transcripts were analyzed sequentially. The first transcript was analyzed and preliminary codes determined. Then the next interview was analyzed, using previously determined codes where appropriate. New codes were added for data that did not fit into the existing codes. Codes were attached to groups of words, phrases, or paragraphs in an attempt to reflect the essence of each experience described by each child. This process was repeated for each interview until all the data had been analyzed.
2. Codes were added and revised through rereadings of the transcripts.
3. Marginal remarks and memoing were completed. Marginal notes were used to document interpretations, reactions, and connections that emerged during data analysis, while memoing was used to take the raw data to a more abstract level.
4. Preliminary themes to capture and represent shared characteristics of data segments were identified.
5. A more focused investigation of observed commonalities and differences in the data was conducted in the second wave of data collection.
6. Transcripts of second interviews were analyzed using the same process described above.
7. Gradually, final interpretations were reached.

During this analytic process, I continually rephrased the clusters of codes, or experiences, confirming their relevance by extensive reading, rereading, and reflecting

upon the original statements in the original transcriptions to get the meaning of the participants' statements in context. The clusters of identified themes that emerged from, and were common to, the participants' experiences were also validated by re-examining them in the larger context of all interview data collected from each participant. This procedure ensured that these themes accounted for the meaning of the transcripts and did not propose anything not present in the original transcripts (Riemen, 1986). Prior to data collection and analysis, I identified, articulated, and set aside any assumptions, biases, and experiences, in strict adherence to the principles of bracketing. For this purpose, a colleague interviewed me one-on-one in an unstructured fashion. The documentation coming out of this interview was referred to during data analysis to reflect on how my biases and personal experiences might be influencing the analysis.

Ensuring Rigour

Rigour is required in all research to "prevent error of either a constant or intermittent nature" (Morse & Field, 1995, p. 143). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed a model addressing four aspects of the trustworthiness of qualitative research, namely: (a) truth value or credibility – the ability of the researcher to report the truth, as experienced by the participants, as clearly as possible; (b) applicability or transferability – the degree to which the findings can be applied to other settings, situations, contexts, or with other populations; (c) consistency or dependability – the extent to which the findings, or in the case of qualitative research, the interpretation of findings, are consistent and logical; and (d) neutrality or confirmability – the freedom from bias in the research process. The trustworthiness of this study was enhanced through the following procedures aimed at ensuring rigour:

1. Given that "the reliability of research . . . taking children as a target group is dependent upon the degree of freedom they enjoy to take part actively in a research process" (Kefalyew, 1996, p. 204), I made special efforts to ensure that the children were well aware of the voluntary nature of the research process and their rights as participants. In addition, I gave the children plenty of narrative space to tell their stories during the semi-structured interviews since "when space is made for them, children's voices express themselves clearly" (Mauthner, 1997, p. 21).
2. By clearly documenting every decision, procedure, and insight throughout the entire research process, I developed an audit trail that would allow another researcher to clearly follow the "decision trail" I used to arrive at the findings of this study (Morse & Field, 1995).
3. Peer review, the process of engaging a colleague in an extensive discussion of one's findings, tentative analyses, and conclusions (Morse & Field, 1995), was ongoing between my thesis committee members and myself.
4. Consistent maintenance of audiotapes and transcripts was used to ensure the integrity and consistency of the data.

Ethical Issues

This research was reviewed by the Health Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. All ethical guidelines as outlined by the ethics board were strictly adhered to throughout the entire research process. Since this study involved direct contact with children, it was necessary to address a couple of ethical issues that are, although common to all research, more salient when the participants are children.

Privacy and confidentiality are important issues in any research. These issues in research with children are, however, complicated in that the parents or guardians of the participating children may expect to be told about the private experiences or thoughts of the children for whom they are responsible (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). In this study, the children were assured that only I would have access to the raw data (the audiotapes), but that, if they wished, they could come into my office and listen to the audiotape or read the transcripts anytime after the interview. Otherwise, all audiotapes and the original copy of the transcriptions would be kept in a locked cabinet and destroyed after seven years (University of Alberta, 2003).

All the interviews conducted in English were transcribed by myself. The research assistants involved in performing the transcription of and the back-translation of the Cantonese interview all signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix G). Furthermore, all persons referred to in the data were identified only by pseudonyms. Names or any other identifying information did not appear on any tapes or transcripts nor were they referred to in any discussion of the data with research team members. Data and findings may be used for additional research, but only after further ethical clearance is obtained.

There was, however, one important exception to these rules: in the event that, during the interview, there was disclosure of child abuse or of self-harm, child abuse was to be reported to Children's Services, and evidence of self-harm or of potential of self-harm was to be reported to the parents and school counselors. This procedure is in adherence to Alberta's Child Welfare Act, which stipulates that "any person who has reasonable grounds to believe a child is in need of protective services must report those suspicions" (Alberta Children's Services, 2002, p. 8). Both the children and their parents

were alerted to this exception before each interview. Concerns with child abuse or self-harm did not arise during any of the participants' interviews in this study.

Morrow and Richards (1996) asserted that "the biggest ethical challenge for researchers working with children is the disparities in power and status between adults and children" (p. 98). In this study, certain assumptions were made and procedures were followed to assist in breaking down this imbalance of power. First, the starting point of this study was the assumption that these children possessed unique experiences that researchers could learn from. Another assumption was that these children were the experts in the phenomenon of interest, which was why some of them were asked back for a second interview so that more could be learned about their experiences. By allowing the children to, to some extent, direct the course of their interviews in telling their stories through the use of a semi-structured interview, and by offering opportunities for the children to participate in the in-depth articulation of the research data through a second interview, the research process became an empowering experience for both the children and myself.

Role of the Researcher

No matter where they live in Canada and what their situation is, Chinese immigrant children all have their own experiences and stories on adaptation. Having come to this country from Hong Kong as a Chinese elementary-aged child, I have lived most of my life between two very different worlds. I know there are many others who do the same. My experience has been full of ups and downs, learning and unlearning, excitement and confusion. I know that I am not unique in that either.

All the same, my experience is not necessarily the typical immigration experience that Chinese immigrant children go through. I have not lived with my parents since I moved to Canada. During the first years of my resettlement in Canada, I lived in the small rural town of Provost, with a population of 2000, in east-central Alberta. Through those years, I did not have even one Chinese classmate or teacher. There were the initial cultural shocks, language difficulties, and homesickness. But I became comfortable with the Canadian way of life fairly quickly. Everyone around me, who were all English-speaking, made learning English easier for me. In fact, I had no choice but to learn English if I wanted to be able to communicate outside the home. For many years after that, I hardly looked back on my own adaptation experience. In fact, I had never had any particular interest in, or an awareness of, the human significance of adapting to a new country. Never. Not until this one incident years later.

After obtaining my Bachelor of Science degree in psychology, I worked as a behavioural interventionist with special needs children, during which time I had a morning placement at an elementary school in Edmonton. I will never forget this one day – a very typical sunny day – when I stood at the school's main entrance, greeting the children and parents as they hugged each other goodbye. Then, a quiet Asian immigrant girl walked in the door with her father, and after exchanging a very formal (verbal) goodbye with each other, the dad left, without a trace of emotion. For a few seconds, the girl just stood there in the midst of all the commotion surrounding her. Then she looked at me. My heart sank. I followed my natural impulse: to walk over to her and embrace her: "Good morning Charlene." She returned my hug – "Thank you Miss Lo" – and smiled.

Suddenly, all the pieces of the puzzle that I had neglected, but had been such a big part of my life for so long, started to emerge and come together: the difficulties and cultural shock I encountered when I first moved to Canada; the days when I thought I would never fully understand anyone around me; the moments when I foolishly thought that my own parents did not care about me as much as my non-Chinese friends' parents did for them; the differences I noticed between the friends I met during university who were Canadian-born, foreign-born, Chinese, and non-Chinese; and, of course, the smile on Charlene's face.

I kept thinking of Charlene after that, picturing her standing at the door after her father had left, perhaps seeing her as an image of the little girl I had been, perhaps seeing her situation as the situation I had faced, once upon a time. Looking back and recalling my early adaptation experiences in the days that followed, a great many vivid memories, one after another, sprang to mind. I remembered in particular how much I struggled to learn the language: the frustration, the confusion. I remembered how much I wanted to be like my Caucasian friends: wanted to talk like them, dress like them, be one of them. As I started to get used to the Canadian way of life, I also started to feel better about myself. I did and I didn't: I also felt guilty about losing some of my "Chineseness," as my parents call it. In this, despite all the ways in which my own circumstances may have been different from those of others, I was left to wonder if this is not a common ground I share with a great many other Chinese immigrant children.

Looking for some answers, I went into the literature hoping to find out what the research has revealed about the immigration experience of Chinese immigrant children in Canada. I found mostly quantitative studies. Most of these studies were conducted with

adults or adolescents. These studies provided me with a great deal of research-based knowledge on immigrants and their adaptation, often based on general statistical trends. Yes, many immigrants are having adjustment difficulties. Yes, immigration can be stressful. These studies, however, did not tell me what I really wanted to know: how are the younger Chinese immigrant children in Canada doing? What are they feeling and thinking? How well do they understand and to what degree are they able to integrate the changes wrought by migration? What, to them, is particularly stressful about immigration? How are they coping?

My personal experiences with adaptation as a young child, coupled with the paucity of qualitative research on preadolescent Chinese immigrant children in Canada, shaped my intention to conduct this research. I wanted to hear their stories, happy or sad. Understanding their unique needs and feelings will be a crucial first step in easing their transition into Canadian society and developing appropriate community programs or school services for these children. At the outset of this study, however, I realized that there were certain preconceptions, judgments, knowledge, and beliefs I held with regard to this topic. Based on my own experience, a review of the literature, and an interview that a colleague conducted with me, my bracketed assumptions fell into six categories as follows:

1. Adaptation – age is a very important factor in how well a person is able to adapt. Younger children, with the possible exception of the very young, tend to find adaptation easier and smoother than older children and adults do.
2. Comparison of life in the two countries – Canada is a more pleasant place for everyday living. Hong Kong, however, is a more vibrant and energetic city. There

is no question that school life in Canada is a lot less stressful than that of Hong Kong.

3. Cultural differences – Chinese and Canadian cultures, different as they are from each other, are both alive and valued in Canada. I have become aware of the many virtues and beauties of each culture.
4. Changes in family – family conflicts, arising from cultural differences between the East and the West, are common and become more intense and problematic with children's growing autonomy and desire to fit in.
5. The "model minority" stereotype – many Chinese students in Canada do excel academically and conform to such a stereotype. There are, however, many more Chinese whose lives are very different from the image that the public and research have perpetuated.
6. Racism and discrimination – while these things are a fact of life for many immigrants, especially for those who belong to ethnic minority groups, my personal experience tells me that immigrants and their children do not necessarily have to become victims of such negative attitudes and behaviours.

As I became more deeply involved in this research, I became increasingly aware of the importance of setting aside my prejudgments when conducting this study. Part of the process was a role change: I put my own experiences behind me and became the listener, the facilitator, the interpreter, the one vicariously taking part in the children's experiences. I was surprised at how deeply every single child and his or her experiences affected me. In spite of all that I had read and seen and heard and experienced to that point, I realized that I was just beginning to understand this group of children and their

remarkable experiences. This feeling became especially apparent when the children began to spontaneously talk about identity issues – issues that were not even addressed in the initial interview guide. I had underestimated, it turns out, how active these children were in constructing their lives and the meanings they attached to their lives. They left me with a feeling of admiration and awe.

Many personal issues came up for me during their interviews and the subsequent data analysis. I was able to touch bases with their experiences and emotions. Many of the words the children used repeatedly throughout the interviews – "happy," "sad," "friends," "confused," "different" – helped me forge emotional connections with their experiences. Indeed, many of the things the children said were things I myself could have said at that age. Their stories held personal meanings for me, forcing me, throughout the research process, to distance myself from my own reactions. Even now, having completed all the interviews, I am still pondering to what extent my immigration experience was the same as, and to what extent it was different from, that of other Chinese immigrant children.

In the end, I hope I can help these Chinese immigrant children tell their stories, make their experiences visible, and see their efforts in adapting to Canadian life valued in research and in our society. So let us now hear these voices. Let us hear their stories. Let us learn about their experiences.

CHAPTER THREE

Results

What is the experience of Chinese immigrant children as they go through the immigration and adaptation process? Using a discovery-oriented approach, nine macro-level themes emerged from the experiences described by the 11 participants. Although it was not my intention to look for a framework during data collection and analysis, it became apparent that the children were describing their experiences in terms of three distinct time frames. The three time frames, in the order of both the children's chronological experiences and the presentation of results, are: (a) pre-immigration and arrival, thematically characterized by the various emotions and expectations surrounding the move to Canada and on arrival; (b) adaptation, in which the following themes were prominent: language, connecting with Canadian peers, school, and post-immigration family life; and (c) today – looking back and looking ahead, thematically characterized by comparisons of life in the two countries, perceived cultural differences, and the ups and downs of adaptation.

In investigating my research question, I sought to understand the experience of these Chinese immigrant children. As the interviews progressed, I discovered that these children were also trying to understand their own experiences by uncovering who they have become as a result of adapting to Canadian life. Hence, an unexpected theme – the ninth theme of identity – emerged. It should be noted that despite the interrelatedness and overlapping of the nine separate themes, data were categorized, for the sake of explication, according to what I considered the essence of each statement.

This chapter will be divided into two parts. It will begin with a presentation of the children's experiences in such a way as to reflect the chronology of their experiences as they made the transition to Canadian life. The eight themes pertinent to the process of the participants' immigration and adaptation will be included in this first part. The data presented will demonstrate that there were obvious commonalities among all the participants' adaptation experiences. It will become equally evident that each child's experience was unique in its own way. The second part of the chapter will look at these children's negotiation of their changing identity. The data presented in this concluding section will augment our understanding of these children's adaptation experiences by looking at the meanings that these children, from their unique perspectives, attached to their journey.

Pre-Immigration

The first set of themes that arose out of the participants' immigration experiences journeys back to the emotions experienced and expectations held in the period after deciding to come to Canada but before their actual arrival.

Emotions and Expectations

Excitement and happiness.

An overarching theme across all participants' transcripts was their excitement and happiness during their preparation to move to Canada. For many, the positive emotions stemmed from the anticipated novelty of living in a new country, as described by these participants: "I was really excited because there's like some things that I had never seen before such as snow. And it's just like, 'Wow, I'm going to a place like you've seen in movies'" (Angela, female, Hong Kong). "I was happy with the feeling that everything

will be new, with so many unknowns" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). Some participants also eagerly looked forward to changes in everyday life in the new country: "I was feeling excited, and I was feeling very happy because I was wondering . . . what will my house look like" (Jessica, female, mainland China). "I always wanted to go to North America and speak English cuz we had two people from American in our kindergarten class and I was like, I was sort of jealous of them" (Brianna, female, mainland China).

Sadness.

For the majority of the participants, the excitement and happiness were accompanied by a sense of sadness at having to leave their loved ones behind. As one participant noted, "I was kind of excited, but then I had to leave my family and my friends" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong). The children also noticed the sadness in extended family members, as described by this child: "My grandma was sad" (Devon, male, mainland China). Those who did not report any sadness recognized that their young ages at the time of immigration prevented them from fully understanding the situation. As one child put it: "I was still little and I thought that I would get to see my friends again. So I wasn't feeling sad. I wasn't really clear on why we were coming here" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). Another echoed the sentiment: "I wasn't really sad cuz I was still young, and I didn't really understand that much. So I just went and, you know, to see what happens" (Brianna, female, mainland China).

Fear and nervousness.

Most of the participants did not cite fear as one of the emotions they experienced, as exemplified by this participant: "NO scary. None. Not even a little bit" (Colby, male, mainland China). Among the few who did, their fear was attributed to their lack of

English proficiency. The anticipated unknowns that contributed to the excitement for some were the source of nervousness for others. In one child's words:

> I was sort of nervous because of the friends that I'd have. I don't know if I'd, like, join in anyone cuz I didn't know English yet. I didn't know if I was gonna be good at school or not. I was just wondering if I was gonna make lots of friends. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

Expectations.

It became obvious during the coding process that many of the participants' feelings regarding the move to Canada were grounded in or associated with their expectations of Canada and of life in Canada. Typically, participants held positive expectations of what life would be like in Canada in a variety of respects: they expected Canadians to be nice, the country to be clean, school to be easier, the weather to be colder, and that there would be greater freedom than in mainland China or Hong Kong. One child recalled: "I thought Canada was like, a nice country . . . nice environment, people are nice, everything's just good. Just good. Better than China" (Colby, male, mainland China). Another child echoed these positive perceptions of Canada: "I knew Canada had more freedom than China before, and Canada wasn't as messy as China" (Brianna, female, mainland China). This child went on to demonstrate that both knowledge of her own and experiences of others who had lived the North American life helped shape these children's expectations:

> I knew Canada would be a whole different atmosphere because everyone talks English. I knew it would be much colder . . . the coldness I learned from a map

> that my mom showed me and, yeah, it was like all the way up north. And I always heard stories that Canada had lots of snow.

Another child recalled how he learned of North American school life from a classmate:

> In the class in China, there's a student, she went to the U.S.A. and then came back to China for one year. And then she just told us that in the U.S., study there is like so easy. Way easier.than school in China. (Colby, male, mainland China)

Arrival

First Impressions of Canada

The participants vividly described their first impressions of Canada upon arrival. The contrast between Canada's environment and the environment in their homelands made the biggest impact on the participants, as put simply by these children: "Air's fresher" (Tylor, male, mainland China). "Nice, less crowded, cleaner" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). Another participant described, in greater detail, the differences she noticed: "Not many people on the streets. Not many apartments but houses. The streets were really different and there weren't a lot of taxis everywhere" (Brianna, female, mainland China).

Surprises.

For the most part, the participants' positive expectations about Canada were fulfilled upon arrival. The children, however, immediately encountered some things they had not expected. When asked what surprised them the most, one boy said:

> Too little people . . . in China where I lived, like, so crowded. Here, if you go on the street, you can barely see anybody. And in China where I used to live, because

it's so crowded, when I go downstairs I'll meet somebody that I know. Here, no. Too little people. (Colby, male, mainland China)

Another child noticed that "Canada's friendlier. Friendlier" (Brianna, female, mainland China). In general, participants described the surprises in positive terms. The one notable exception was how cold and unpleasant snow actually was to them, as noted by this child: "There were some things that were surprising, like the snow. It was so cold . . . like, this is so cold, why did I come here?" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

In summary, all participants described the emotions and expectations that surrounded the preparation to move to Canada in positive and energetic tones. The sadness and fear reported by some were overshadowed by the positive emotions that dominated their discussion of the period before they emigrated. Given their young ages, these participants most likely played a passive role in the immigration process. Some participants also noted their lack of comprehension of the situation leading up to and surrounding the immigration decision. All children, however, were eager to embrace the challenges and changes that were to become part of their journey of adaptation in Canada.

Adaptation

The following section will present the four themes that were integral to the participants' adaptation experiences in Canada, namely, the themes of language, peers, school, and post-immigration family life. These themes will illustrate the day-to-day process that these children went through as they adapted to Canadian life.

Language

The most prevalent theme emerging from the data was in regard to learning and speaking English. All children in this study identified issues associated with language

proficiency as playing a significant role in the adaptation process. For these immigrant children, adaptation started with and proceeded through communication. Language was a thread that permeated all the other themes. It is therefore fitting that the theme of language be presented first, as it not only serves to illuminate the first steps taken by these children as they embarked on the adaptation journey, but also sets the stage for the presentation of other themes in this study.

Communication difficulties due to lack of proficiency.

Given that the children neither understood nor spoke much English when they first arrived in Canada, much of their early experience was shrouded in confusion and frustration. Statements made by these children indicated the difficulties they encountered when they tried to communicate with others: "I didn't understand anything. I didn't know what to do. I just didn't do anything" (Tylor, male, mainland China). "Lots of guessing" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). "I didn't speak English. I didn't understand anything. When they ask me some questions, I just say 'yes,' 'no,' which I don't even know what they're talking about" (Colby, male, mainland China).

Efforts to communicate with others using their limited English led to confusion in many circumstances, most notably in school. As one participant stated: "The teacher just keeps talking in a language you don't understand. Well, you'd understand some words, but sometimes you'd get the idea but sometimes you just don't. You're just like, 'What are they talking about?'" (Angela, female, Hong Kong). This same child also laughingly recalled one incident where the lack of language proficiency led to a confusion that lasted for days:

> Also in grade four I had to learn French too. And I'm just like, why are they teaching us ABCs again? Because it's similar to English. So I was like, is she doing this for me or what? And I wasn't sure, and I was like, "That's weird." And then we started to learn some words. And then I started to know that this was called French in English, but I just don't know what it is in Chinese.[2] But I know it's another language, and then I was like, "OH, THAT's why she's teaching us that."

Although many participants were able to laugh off their early struggles with the English language, all children acknowledged the feelings that had accompanied the learning of the language. With little or no English language skills when they arrived, the participants often felt confused, fearful, and helpless. Some of their reminiscences of the early days convey these feelings: "After I started school I started feeling scared. I didn't speak English. I didn't know what the teacher was talking about" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). "It was scary because I really didn't know English when I came" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong). "People were speaking in a language that I don't know. . . . It's just hard" (Tylor, male, mainland China).

It was evident from the participants' stories that the feeling of dependency also led to feelings of guilt, as one participant illustrated:

> [My friends] were so, they were so annoyed with me because I asked them everything. And my grade four teacher got really pissed at me because I kept asking her questions . . . I felt really bad because I didn't know what to do cuz I

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[2] The participants most often referred to their mother tongue as "Chinese" rather than specifying Mandarin or Cantonese.

> can't listen to them because they're talking in English. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

Besides generating feelings of dependency and guilt, the lack of English proficiency also caused some children to become withdrawn and isolated. One girl recalled: "At first, even if my classmates came to me, I would walk away. I thought they would make fun of me, so I didn't want to be around them, because I didn't know what they were saying" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). For this participant, gaining language proficiency was the key to overcoming social isolation. She went on to add: "It wasn't until later when I finally understood what they were saying that I started being around them." Another child, who also saw the lack of English language skills as a social barrier, echoed: "[I didn't have any friends] in grade one. In grade two [I started to have friends] cuz I spoke English better" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong).

The following account of one participant's experience was probably the most telling because not only did it illustrate her frustration over the inability to use English to communicate, to express her intentions, and to be understood, but it also revealed the potential danger hidden in these children's lack of English proficiency:

> I remember one day it was early out day in school. But I didn't know. I didn't know what the teacher was saying, so I didn't know. So everybody left and I was the only one left at school. At that time my house was really close to the school. So I thought I would just walk home on my own. I started walking and I got really scared, I was only about seven then. As I was walking, this man was walking towards me. I thought he was going to kidnap me . . . and there were two girls at the bus stop. I wanted to tell the girls that the guy wanted to kidnap me. But I

> didn't know how. I started crying. And the girls started laughing at me. Then the guy left. . . . I just couldn't communicate with them. (Elenor, female, Hong Kong)

Overcoming the language barrier.

Many children tried to overcome the communication barrier caused by language by using other resources they had available. One child said: "I tried to give them symbols" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). Another child recalled how she successfully communicated the word "tomorrow" to her teacher based on what she knew about the word "tomorrow," which in Chinese is comprised of the words "sun" and "moon":

> I remember one time I wanted to write "tomorrow," but I didn't know how, and I wanted to ask the teacher but didn't know how also, so I drew a sun and I drew a moon, and I made the teacher guess. Finally she guessed it. (Elenor, female, Hong Kong)

Another strategy commonly used by the participants to communicate with others in school was the reliance on other Chinese-speaking children to act as translators. The following statements convey the importance of Chinese-speaking peers in the early part of their lives in Canada:

> When I came I got a stomach-ache and then there's this Chinese girl and she knew English too. So the teacher said something to her and told her to tell me in Chinese and I knew what she was saying. (Jordan, male, Hong Kong)

Another child recalled: "I had my Chinese friends explaining to me" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

Learning English.

All the participants acknowledged that learning English was the first and foremost personal challenge they faced upon arrival in Canada. The way they recounted their stories with only the faintest, if any, accent, clad in the latest Canadian children's fashion, strongly suggests that they had all but overcome the language barrier in the mere three to five years they had been here. When asked what the key was to learning English so quickly, many credited the teachers and English as a Second Language (ESL) helpers at school: "The teachers they taught me and we did spellings and that's how we learned to do some words and spell words" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong). "There's this person in the school who helped new people. She helped me learn more words" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong).

The mass media also provided some children with a learning opportunity, as one child stated: "I learned English by watching TV" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). For the majority, however, it was the direct, interpersonal contact and interaction with the English-speaking people surrounding them that accelerated the process of learning. In fact, it worked so well for them that one child saw it as desirable to immerse new immigrant children in English as much as possible: "I'd probably speak English to [the new immigrant children]. It's better for them. They'll learn English better. They have to" (Colby, male, mainland China).

Typically, it took the participants one to two years to gain a reasonable level of comprehension of the language. One participant recalled:

> I had to go to ESL at first. When I was in grade three I didn't know anything. Then it got better. When I was in grade four, I could speak a little bit. It wasn't until grade five when things were OK. (Elenor, female, Hong Kong)

Language-related recommendations.

All participants expressed appreciation of the help they received in learning English. Having gone through the process of second-language acquisition, they noted that there was definite room for improvement in the current ESL system to make it more effective in helping immigrant children learn English. Some of them also shared very personal, simple, yet practical advice for Canadian teachers and children, advice that they felt could potentially make all the difference in the world to a vulnerable immigrant child trying to learn English. The followings are some of the suggestions that the participants offered: "There should be more English teachers in school, more of them, because there's usually only one. So I suggest they have more and treat [immigrant children] more special than other people" (Brianna, female, mainland China). "After [the teachers] are done teaching, they can come over and ask if you understand and [then] they can like, help you" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong). "[There should be] more people that speak our language, and help them, like, learn English and help them learn how to get along with the people in Canada" (Devon, male, mainland China).

In regard to the set-up of the current ESL programs, one child had the following suggestion:

> An ESL teacher . . . needs to help [immigrant children] with like pronunciation, not just like give them a worksheet to do. Like . . . something you can help with,

like talk to them, make them talk to their classmates in English. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

In summary, all participants, albeit with varying degrees of difficulty, perceived the lack of English proficiency to be the first issue they had to deal with upon arrival in Canada. It seemed that the higher the level of self-confidence with English that the children showed during the interview, the less they perceived learning English to be a major difficulty. It was also clear that the topic of language was intertwined with many other areas in these children's lives, such as peers, school, and family. In addition, language played a prominent role in these children's identity and in the meaning they gave to their immigration experience. The interaction between language and these other prominent spheres of these children's experiences will be discussed separately under each respective theme.

Furthermore, the children's conversations suggested an intimate relationship between language and peers. Peers played an important role in helping these immigrant children learn English. The increased English proficiency, in turn, helped immigrant children overcome social isolation. In fact, the participants repeatedly brought up the topic of peer relationships throughout the interview. The theme of connecting with Canadian peers will be discussed next.

Connecting with Canadian Peers

Relationships with peers figured prominently in these immigrant children's lives. In fact, the topic of peers was raised spontaneously by the majority of the participants. In this section, stories of these children's friendships made while they were in Canada will be presented.

General niceness and importance of Canadian peers.

All participants appreciated the "niceness" shown by Canadian peers, regardless of their ethnic background. This generosity was especially meaningful and comforting to the participants during the early days of their adaptation when they were still struggling with the language. As one participant recalled: "If I say something wrong, they don't laugh at me because they know that I'm just trying to talk with them in English" (Jessica, female, mainland China). Another recognized the role that his peers played in his early adjustment to Canadian life: "They were very helpful" (Tylor, male, mainland China). The children also shared experiences of having peers who were supportive and patient and the difference that made in their process of adaptation. As one child put it:

> They're very nice to me. . . . Like, if they ask me a question, which is in English of course, and I don't know cuz my English is so bad, and if I don't know, they take a long time, a very long time to explain it to me until I know it. Or if it takes a REALLY long time . . . they take a really long time to explain it to me until I understand it. (Colby, male, mainland China)

The friendship and companionship offered by peers were also noted by the participants. From sharing play-time together – "They always play with me" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong) – to sharing things that are personal – "I can share some things with [my friends] that I don't share with my family . . . I can tell them more" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong) – peers held an irreplaceable spot in these children's lives, as further demonstrated by this child's comments:

> I share my feelings with my friends more than what I would with my parents. Because it's not a big deal after I tell them. But if I tell my parents, I don't know

> what they would do. If I tell my friends, they won't do much about it. And we think the same way. (Elenor, female, Hong Kong)

Peers played such a prominent role in these children's lives that the majority of the participants cited making friends and spending time with friends to be the high-points of their lives in Canada so far, as exemplified by these statements: "I'm really happy because I have way more friends than I had when I was back in China" (Brianna, female, mainland China); "The happiest thing was, I went to my friend's house and then it was her sister's birthday party and her mom invited us" (Jessica, female, mainland China). Statements made by one participant convey the impact friendships have had on these children:

> [How happy I am here] depends on my friends, I guess. . . . When my friends, they turn into my best friends, then I'll feel really good. . . . Like, if I can't hang out with my friends I'd [feel not as happy about life in Canada]. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

Importance of peers from home country or same ethnic background.

All participants acknowledged the important role that peers, both Chinese and non-Chinese, played in their lives. Most participants, however, also noted a tendency to turn to those from their country of origin or those who shared their ethnic background. Sharing similar interests, values, and experiences was an important element of friendship for these participants, who often felt that they were able to share all these things only with Chinese peers. The following statements illustrate this feeling: "I like my Chinese friends better than Canadian friends. Cuz like, I just think we have more in common. Like, Canadians really like to play sports. We, I like to play sports but not really like to"

(Colby, male, mainland China). "My Chinese friends, we probably think the same way" (Tylor, male, mainland China). "I have friends . . . who are Cantonese, so I get to share my experience with them" (Angela, female, Hong Kong). This same child went on to reveal how friendships with Chinese peers were based on both emotional and practical needs:

> What I really wanted in grade three was more Chinese in my class so that I can like, well, talk more, like, so that I won't, I wouldn't feel lonely, I wouldn't have to ask the teacher what that means, I would understand what they're talking about.

Differential treatments from peers.

When asked whether peers treated them differently because of their ethnic or immigration background, the participants' responses were mixed. Some participants reported that they received especially kind treatment from their peers because of their immigrant background, as described by this child: "They're nicer. Because I didn't know English, so like, everybody was nicer to me than normal" (Colby, male, mainland China). Other participants, on the other hand, recalled negative treatments by their peers. As one child put it: "They'll tease me and those things" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong). In many cases, the negative treatment received by the participants seemed to originate from their non-Chinese peers, as described by this child: "When I just came here [they treated me differently]. Only those that know English. The Chinese they treat me like normal cuz they're Chinese too. [The non-Chinese] will say like, I'm Chinese and I'm different from them" (Devon, male, mainland China).

Still other participants did not perceive their ethnic or immigration background as giving them a special status among their peers. This group of participants saw themselves

as the same as every other child in school. Statements made by the following participants indicate this point of view: "I don't think they treat me differently because like from school, we learned a song that everyone needs to be treated the same. Any country, it doesn't matter" (Brianna, female, mainland China).."In our school there's quite a few people that came from another country. And you get treated the same. You don't feel like you're special people" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong).

In summary, all participants valued their friendships, both Chinese and non-Chinese, made during their time in Canada. They recognized the importance of the help offered by Canadian peers in learning not only the English language but also about Canadian life. The understanding shown by Canadian peers was also appreciated. The majority of the participants indicated that peers from the same culture and speaking the same language offered a special kind of support, intimacy, and mutual understanding. Furthermore, the participants had varying experiences as to the impact that their ethnic and immigration background had on their relationships with peers. The issue of differential treatment, specifically, the issue of racism and discrimination, will be discussed further in a later section. Next, the theme of school, the setting where most peer interactions took place for the participants, will be discussed.

School

For the most part, the participants indicated a very positive assessment of their school experience in Canada. The first day of school in Canada was a highly significant event in all of the participants' adaptation journey. Their experiences on this memorable day will be presented first. The perceived differences between the school systems in their

homelands and Canada, as well as between the Chinese and non-Chinese peers in their schools, will be discussed next. This section will end with the topic of expectations.

First day of school.

The significance of the first day of school in the participants' memory was apparent from the way they described this day in great detail during the interviews. For them, this first day of school was the day that they first had to confront the confusion, frustration, and fear that accompanied their lack of English proficiency. One child recalled the anxiety he suffered on that day: "When I first came to Canada, in the first day of school . . . I was very nervous cuz I didn't know anybody here. I didn't speak English. I didn't understand anything" (Colby, male, mainland China). The strangeness of Canadian school practices, when coupled with the lack of ability to understand, made these children passive participants on the first day of school. One participant told of her first day of school experience as follows:

> I think I was in like, the academic class, I'm not sure. But they had to move me because I didn't understand a thing. And then I saw all these Chinese and I really wanted to talk to them because I don't know what's going on. The teacher just keeps talking in a language you don't understand. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

Even the set-up itself and the hours of instruction were unusual for some children. One child laughed when recalling how she left at recess on her first day, thinking that school was finished for the day, as was the daily practice in her home country:

> The first day, because school in Hong Kong only has two recesses and here they have three, one being the lunch hour, as I later found out, so at the third recess I thought school was over, so I got my backpack and left. But everybody else was

> still around, so I just stood there and waited for them to go first. I didn't know what was going on, so I just started walking. And while I was walking, at the time it was snowing; I lost my scarf, so I started looking for it. Then my teacher found it and I put it back on. That's when I knew school wasn't over yet. (Elenor, female, Hong Kong)

While fear and nervousness were common feelings for the participants, the majority also acknowledged the support and niceness shown by teachers and classmates and the difference that made in their first day of school experience. The following statements illustrate this: "I felt scared, [but people were] nice and kind" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong); "I don't even know what they're talking about. And like, but actually they're very nice to me. So first I was nervous, then, second, no, not nervous at all" (Colby, male, mainland China). "Some people would say hi to me, well, actually there were lots . . . and they try to be friendly. And, yeah, I feel really comfortable, but some uncomfortable in not understanding" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

Not all children's first day of school experience had negative aspects to it. One child showed how her own attitude and her peers helped make her first day of school in Canada a great experience:

> I was very happy. I was very excited. And even my grade one teacher, she went to my mom after school and told her that I was a very happy girl, and some people who came from a different country, their first day of school, they cried and were lonely. But I was very joyful. I got along with the other Chinese children and they explained to me about everything. . . . It was a good day. I expected it sort of to be like that. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

Differences between school in homeland and school in Canada.

With respect to school life after the initial period of adjustment, a major sub-theme was the contrast between the school system in their homelands and that of the Canadian system. Differences in workload and curriculum were most commonly noticed by the participants. Most of the children perceived the workload to be heavier in their home country's school system compared to what they received in Canada. One child recalled how "the schools give more homework in Hong Kong" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). Even a child who came to Canada as a kindergartener noticed the difference, in her own way, in workload between the two school systems: "In Hong Kong there's much more work at school because here the backpack is not so heavy" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong).

Besides the workload, some children also perceived the school curriculum to be easier in Canada. One child, for instance, laughingly recalled the following: "The school stuff was too easy. . . . I always thought I was doing it wrong because it seemed too easy" (Tylor, male, mainland China). Recognizing that they came from orderly and authoritarian school environments in which students were to strictly respect and obey their teachers, most of the participants found the friendlier and more open relationships between students and teachers in Canada to be quite pleasant in comparison. The following statement illustrates the contrast between the two:

> In China the teachers weren't that nice. They gave me more pressure. . . . In my little community in China we were brought up to raise our hands nicely, stand up and speak to the teacher nice and firm. Here you just raise our hands up a little and you say whatever, you know. Here the teachers, they care about every single

> person . . . they don't boss you around as much. They're not as strict . . . they just give you fun. The teachers are much more friendly here. That's what made the difference in school. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

Another child echoed these sentiments:

> In China, the teachers are so bad. . . . [In the school I'm in now,] with the teacher, if I walked into a classroom, the teacher tells me the direction, I don't know English right, so I don't understand. So she explained once, and once more, until I understand, in Canada. The Chinese teachers, I don't think so. Explain once, and if you don't know what to do, that's it. (Colby, male, mainland China)

This child went on to demonstrate how teachers in Canada were less authoritarian than those in his home country:

> [In China] if you did something really messy, write something really messy . . . if it's something not neat, it'll be torn and then thrown into the garbage. Here, the teachers, they have to learn to read messy language.

As a result of the observed differences, most of the participants felt that they faced less pressure in Canada. In addition, some participants spoke fondly of the learning style used by the Canadian school system. As one child put it:

> It gives you a more fun way of learning instead of sitting there at the desk for five hours, five hours. You get break times more, so you relax yourself . . . [unlike] the Chinese religion of staying on the couch and doing your homework every day. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

The participants also noted several other differences between the two school systems. Some children cited the multicultural student make-up in Canadian schools, as

stated by this child: "People around me is different, because in Hong Kong it's like all Chinese. But here is different, it's all kinds of people" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong). Others picked up the differences in class sizes and dress code: "In Hong Kong there're over 40 students in each class. Here each class has about 28 students. In Hong Kong we had to wear uniforms to school. Here we don't" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). A couple of participants also noticed that Canadian schools are more inclined to encourage students to engage in volunteer activities, while a couple of other participants noted that Canadian schools have more resources, both academic and recreational, available for students.

Differences between Chinese and non-Chinese students in school.

Besides the contrast in school systems in the two countries, most of the participants also noticed several differences between the Chinese children and the non-Chinese children in their schools or classes. The most commonly reported difference was the better school performance seen in Chinese children. As one participant put it: "In my class, the Chinese people, their test scores or their report cards are the highest" (Colby, male, mainland China). Most participants acknowledged that the better performance achieved by Chinese children was something embedded in Chinese traditions: "The Chinese, you know, they always want to get good grades cuz that's the way Chinese think" (Brianna, female, mainland China). Many participants also gave credit to the work ethic shown by Chinese children, as exemplified by the following statement: "We all finish homework first, then have fun. [The non-Chinese] always have fun first, then do homework" (Tylor, male, mainland China). Another child commented:

> Canadians, they don't care about studies. "Today, I don't do my homework, who cares, I'll just play for a while, I'll just, so who cares, I'll get a lower grade, who

> cares." Chinese, I just have to do it, do it at school. So they're just like, "I want to finish it with the best quality and the fastest." Yeah, they think different. . . . They never study, that's why they get low marks. They study 10 minutes, 20 minutes, or 30 minutes, they'll get better marks then. . . . Canadians, they still care about their grades, they just don't study. (Colby, male, mainland China)

Others noted the differences in working style between Chinese and non-Chinese children, such as the following:

> [The non-Chinese children] study more stuff, they can't really, like they just study it and then they move on to something else. My parents, and some of the other Chinese people, we study it, we practice it, read it every day, read a bit of new stuff every day but still repeat the old stuff. . . . And Chinese people, they usually get better grades because their parents push them to study more. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

Expectations.

The participants as a whole made it clear that their parents had a strong influence on their approach towards schoolwork. Most of the participants were aware of the expectations that their parents held for them. These expectations ranged from general – "If I do bad, they tell me to do better. When I'm good, they tell me to be gooder, better" (Devon, male, mainland China); "Like on tests and stuff, don't get like too bad or average . . . my mom and dad want me to get at least an over 80% average because she wants me to get into a good high school" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong) – to more specific, like the following: "Getting A's, at least the main subjects. Not just like, gym and arts" (Jordan,

male, Hong Kong); "Like, get 100% on every subject" (Tylor, male, mainland China). One child compared his parents' expectations to those of non-Chinese parents:

> Highest. Way higher than Canadians'. Like, my parents expect me to get 95% or higher. But Canadian parents, they want them to get like, 75, 70 or higher than that. That's like so low. If I get 70, my parents will like, kill me. (Colby, male, mainland China)

Some children also spoke of the extra study work that they did on top of what was assigned by their teachers. One child said the following about this practice, passed on to her by her parents:

> I do two pages of math every day and one page of Chinese, extra to my homework. First, it's because [my parents] want me to get good grades and go to the university. Second, because I think in China they were more tough, they were brought up with it, so they'll continue that. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

While some children held the same expectations of their own school performance as their parents did – "To do better when I'm not very good at something. And when I'm good at something, then make it better" (Devon, male, mainland China) – other children did not seem to put such heavy emphasis on school performance as their parents did. As one child put it: "My mom, she wants me to go to Academic Challenge, and so does my dad. I don't really care what class I'm in" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong).

Still others noticed changes in their attitudes towards school since immigrating to Canada. In one child's words:

> When I was in China I always knew that I'd get good grades because I was a little perfect girl. And, you know, I just knew I had to study because I'd get a

> punishment. And I got good grades in China, mostly everything. But now it's changed. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

When asked whether teachers held different expectations for them because of their Chinese or immigrant background, the participants' responses were again mixed. A couple of participants felt that their teachers might perceive Chinese students as getting better grades because "they've probably had Chinese students before who worked hard and stuff. They just know" (Tylor, male, mainland China). Another child said: "[The teachers] don't expect me [to do better] because I'm a Chinese. They expect me because they expect Chinese people to get good marks because they usually get good marks" (Colby, male, mainland China).

Other participants felt that their teachers expected the same out of them as they did everyone else in the class, as exemplified by the following statement:

> I think [the teacher] expects me, like she expects everyone, to do the things that need to be done at their best effort. So I don't think she only expects one person to do better than the others, the way she expects everyone to do their best. Doesn't matter what country they come from. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

In summary, the participants spoke of their Canadian school experiences in positive terms. They talked about many of the differences between the educational system in Canada and in their homelands, as well as between the Chinese and non-Chinese peers in their schools. Most of them were aware of the expectations put on them by their parents, teachers, and themselves. The importance of academic excellence as an aspect of Chinese culture was recognized. The participants, however, had differing views on whether a stereotype existed for Chinese children's school performance. The topics of

Chinese culture and stereotypes will be looked at in more detail in a later section. Next, the last theme under the adaptation period – post-immigration family life – will be discussed.

Post-Immigration Family Life

Despite having gone through similar immigration processes and sharing similar backgrounds, the participants' portrayals of their post-immigration family life were highly individualized. Various pictures of the participants' relationships and interactions with their families as they adjusted to Canadian life will be presented below.

Post-immigration family relationships.

All but two of the participants reported fairly honest and open relationships with family members. Most, however, admitted to withholding certain matters and feelings from their parents. As one child put it: "I tell them some things, but I don't tell them everything. Like things that happened at school . . . maybe it's like some fights with my friends or something I don't tell them" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong). The participants most often withheld feelings that were directed towards their parents, as illustrated by the following statement: "When [my parents] do something that I don't like, but I know they're right, then I won't tell them that I don't like it. . . . When I'm mad at them, I won't tell them" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). Another child echoed these sentiments:

> My feelings, maybe [I hide them from my parents]. But things I've done, I tell them the truth. Secrets I keep to myself, my feelings I keep to myself. I know I have to be honest with them. Like if something happened to me in school, I'd tell them. . . . If I get sad or angry at another person, not them, I would tell them. But if I get angry at them, then I would just lock myself in my room and punch the

pillow or something. But I would tell them if it was another person, so they could do something about it. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

The participants gave various reasons for withholding matters from their parents: "Because I'm scared they'll punish me" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong). "I don't want them to worry or anything" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong). "Cuz my sister tells me some secrets and I'm not supposed to tell them, [and] like my friends' secrets and some others" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong).

For many of these children there seemed to be a special connection between their siblings, their friends, and themselves. Many of the participants had a tendency to turn to their siblings and peers first before sharing their feelings with their parents: "I tell my brothers more, like, I tell my brothers something more than I tell my parents. I don't know why though, maybe the age is like closer. Because sometimes he would like, understand me more" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong). "When I'm really really sad, then maybe I would tell [my parents]. But first I usually tell my friends" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong).

In terms of post-immigration changes in communication patterns with parents, some participants reported more open relationships with parents after they came to Canada, while other participants reported less open relationships. Still others did not perceive any changes in the way they communicated with their parents. The most commonly cited post-immigration change in family interaction related to language use. The majority of the participants indicated they had started using at least some English to communicate with their parents since coming to Canada. One participant reported using

only English to speak with her parents, while her parents spoke to her exclusively in Mandarin.

In many cases, differential rates of language acquisition between participants and their parents led to communication issues within these families. As one child put it: "Sometimes I have some difficulty speaking some Chinese words and [my parents] have difficulty speaking English words" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong). Another child, whose mother did not speak any English, noted:

> My mom wasn't really used to what my dad was talking [about] because my dad was talking a bit [of] English that my mom wouldn't know. And then I talked to my dad, said my mom doesn't know how to speak English, and then my dad was like, "oh sorry." (Jessica, female, mainland China)

This child went on to demonstrate how the communication issue in her home was further complicated when her English-speaking peers were present:

> At lunch, when my friends are here, and then my mom wants me to speak Chinese, and then my friends are like "No, don't speak Chinese." And then I'm like, "Why can't I?" Then my friends are like, "Well, we don't know how to speak Chinese."

Almost all of the children indicated that they had acquired a greater fluency in English than their parents had, enabling them to become translators or English helpers for their parents in and outside of the home. The following statements provide examples of some of the tasks that came with this new role: "My mom . . . when someone talks English, she asks me to, to show her what it means" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong). "When there's a letter in English, I read it to them and tell them in Chinese what it's

about. And when there's someone at the door that speaks English, I talk to them" (Devon, male, mainland China). "Sometimes they ask me how to pronounce certain words or the meaning of certain words" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). "[My mom] asks me to . . . correct her language. [My dad] asks me like, how do you say some words in . . . English" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong). One child spoke of the frustration that sometimes arose when trying to help her parents with the new language:

> I have to kind of help them with their language, but I'm not the kind of person who likes to teach, so I'd get kind of mad. . . . I like to say some simple stuff that's like really easy to teach, like kicking a ball or something like that, or playing soccer. And my mom, she's like, she needs me to repeat things and I really hate repeating like four or five times, especially like teaching the language. So I get sometimes frustrated. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

The amount of time spent doing things for fun was another post-immigration change discussed by the majority of the participants. The majority of participants reported that, in Canada, they spent more time doing the things they loved. Some children attributed the increased amount of spare time for fun activities to the less stressful school life in Canada, as illustrated by these two participants: "There's probably nothing to do in China. I can't do anything other than school, there's no free time there" (Tylor, male, mainland China). "In China, there is absolutely no time. . . . Homework is the only thing I could think about" (Colby, male, mainland China). Others noted the increased space available for outside activities in Canada. As one child stated: "[Canada] is bigger. There's bigger land for you to play outside" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong).

When asked whether the amount of time spent with family members had changed since coming to Canada, the children's responses were mixed. Some children stated that they spent more time with family members in Canada. One child described the quality time that she spent with her family in Canada as follows:

> We go to the mall or sometimes we go to . . . Fort Edmonton or something. We just take a walk maybe, in the summer, that's been fun. [Sometimes we] just go into the living room and tell some stories. . . . When I was in China I couldn't do all these things because I really didn't do anything. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

Other participants, however, said that interaction among family members was reduced after coming to Canada. One child noticed how life had become busier for his parents: "Here, my mom's trying to, she's in ESL, so here she studies every day, all the time. My dad, trying to find a job, like all the time" (Colby, male, mainland China). Another child recalled the following:

> We went out more when we were in Hong Kong, going to the park and going to barbeques. Because in Hong Kong, my godfather, my grandma, and everybody's there. Over there there're more people who go out together. Here it's just my family. . . . But I don't always want to go with them since I'm older now. I was still little [when I was in Hong Kong], so I just followed them. (Elenor, female, Hong Kong)

The last statement also indicates that growing up was part of the reason for some of the changes observed in the family by participants. A few other children said much the

same thing. One child spoke of the increased understanding between family members as a result of becoming more mature herself:

> Now I know more [about what is going on] between my brother and my mom, between me and my mom, there's, I know more about them, like how they, how my mom treats my brother and how my mom treats me. So now I know the differences more, instead of in Hong Kong when I was little, which I don't really know. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

Another child talked about how growing up has changed her relationship with her parents in a variety of respects, such as in terms of communication: "I don't talk with them as much because I don't need their help as much, I can think of ways myself. . . . Basically, I just started to grow up and I'd like to keep the secrets inside"; in terms of trust: "[When I was in China] I was small and I don't think they'd believe anything a small child would say. Now, I'm starting to get more mature, they trust me"; in terms of responsibility: "In China I was just small and I was little and I wasn't that strong. But now I'm growing up, so I have to be more responsible in helping the family"; and even in terms of discipline:

> When I was small I didn't really understand that many things. I didn't even know that they might get mad at me or ground me for anything. So I just told them anything. I thought at that time that it wouldn't be much of a difference or a big deal. Now I've learned that I can actually go into punishment, so sometimes I don't [tell them everything]. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

In addition to changes in openness, communication patterns, language use, and time spent together, a few participants also mentioned getting more rules within the

family after coming to Canada. As one child put it: "There was no rule in China and when we came here I had rules" (Devon, male, mainland China). Another child offered a possible explanation for having more rules in Canada: "I think it's due to the atmosphere of Canada. Canada is more about personal needs than China. So these rules, we need to follow them" (Brianna, female, mainland China). Furthermore, many participants also talked about the differences in rules between Chinese and non-Chinese families. Their perspectives on these differences will be presented under the theme "Perceived Cultural Differences."

In summary, the participants' relationships with their families seemed relatively positive and peaceful. There was a hint of gender differences, in that the female participants reported less open and honest family relationships than their male counterparts did. Not enough data, however, were collected in this study and further research is needed as to whether and how gender influences immigrant children's relationships with their parents.

Immigration did not seem to have a uniform effect on participants' family relationships. Although the majority of participants reported post-immigration changes in openness, communication patterns, and time spent together with family members, the extent and direction of the changes varied a great deal. The most consistently cited post-immigration change among the participants was the increased amount of English that they used to communicate with their parents. Because of their greater fluency in English, the participants often played an important role in helping their parents function within the larger society. It was also evident that family, in turn, helped structure these children's

identity in many ways. Family influence on participants' identity will be explored as part of the discussion on participants' construction of their identity.

In this adaptation section, I have presented the four themes that were integral to the participants' adaptation experiences in Canada. The next section of this chapter will present the participants' impressions of life and culture in the two countries, followed by their reflections on the adaptation journey and their thoughts as to their future plans.

Today: Looking Back and Looking Ahead

The three themes making up this section – comparisons of life in the two countries, perceived cultural differences, and the ups and downs of adaptation – arose from questions directing the participants to look back on their experience and to look ahead to the future.

Comparisons of Life in the Two Countries

Memories of their homelands.

When asked what they remembered best about their homelands, most participants immediately started to talk about the extended family members and friends they left behind: "[I was always] playing with my cousins, and going to shopping with my grandpa and grandma" (Jessica, female, mainland China); "I remember my friend and I would always walk, because right after school we walked the same way, so we would always . . . talk and then we did this every, every after school we'd get to" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

One child in particular talked about the last birthday she spent in China with her family and friends: "I remember . . . my last birthday in China; we went to this big fancy restaurant and it was really nice, like mostly everyone came. It was my last birthday in

China when I got to see everyone" (Brianna, female, mainland China). Another child described a memento she kept from someone special in her homeland and how she had kept it for years: "I was really happy, and I kept it until now" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

Most of the participants also had fond memories of their shopping experiences in their homelands. The children enthusiastically described the abundance of shopping opportunities, the convenience of getting to various shopping places, and the inexpensiveness of goods in their homelands, as illustrated by the following statements: "Lots of things and lots of clothes to buy" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). "The stuff are cheaper" (Brianna, female, mainland China). "Hong Kong is like . . . I can just walk to malls and stuff. . . . There's a lot of shops and like cheap stuff, you know, it's like, and you can bargain" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

A few participants also talked about places they were familiar with. One child talked about how he missed "the theme parks and some mountains and special restaurants" (Devon, male, mainland China) in his homeland. Others described the daily routines that used to be part of their everyday lives. One child recalled:

> I remember that . . . my cousin, she always brings me to her dad's place, my uncle's, where he works. And lots of the time my uncle gives me food or stuff that I like. [That is special] because I get to walk to the school and then I get to go somewhere else with my cousin and we have lots of fun. (Jessica, female, mainland China)

Among the things they remembered, however, were a few things about their homelands that the participants did not seem to mind leaving behind, such as: "It was

very hot, very noisy, and really crowded" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong); "pollution" (Tylor, male, mainland China); "The buildings are kind of like, dirty" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong); and "construction and noise, the smoke, and like, really really hot" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

Comparing life in Canada with life in homeland.

Typically, the participants described their lives in Canada in energetic tones. They most often identified "nicer environment" as the best thing about living in Canada, as shown by the following statements: "Not that much pollution . . . it's much cleaner" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong). "The environment is nice . . . lots of plants, you just see plants everywhere. Fresh air" (Tylor, male, mainland China). "I'm more healthier cuz in China I always got sick. I think, maybe Canada is much cleaner" (Brianna, female, mainland China).

The participants as a whole were impressed at how much more spacious Canada is, compared to their homelands: "There's not as much people. And the buildings aren't so crowded together. Much more space" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong); "The places are big . . . like, in China the places are small and there's not much space to run around. . . . I'd like to explore places and in China there's not much space for you to explore" (Devon, male, mainland China). Another child spoke of Canada's greater spaciousness as something both inside and outside of the household:

> Here . . . you can spread [out] and like you want to spread around and like . . . in Hong Kong, it's like an island, right? So, so small and crowded, building upwards instead of wider so like, you're kind of crowded in space and . . . the apartments in Hong Kong are only, it's like only the top floor here and . . . it's so small like,

in space, like the living room is only half of the size of this room. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

In addition, most of the participants spoke of how everyday living was better in Canada. Many enjoyed living in a house in Canada as opposed to living in a small apartment unit in their homelands. Others perceived Canada to be a safer and more comfortable place to live. One child stated: "Here you don't have to worry about anything happening. . . . It feels better here. Everything, you don't have to be so stressful. It's more comfortable here" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). Another child simply said that life in Canada "just feels good" (Tylor, male, mainland China). As mentioned in an earlier section, the children also appreciated the less stressful Canadian school life, as exemplified by this child: "The main point that I like about Canada is no homework. That's the main thing. The rest I don't really care. But no homework is very good" (Colby, male, mainland China).

A few children specifically mentioned that they liked the summer weather in Canada better, citing the unpleasant humidity and high temperatures in their homelands during the summer months. The niceness of Canadian people, as well as the freedom offered by this country, amongst other things, were also appreciated: "People are really nice here" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong). "In Canada, the government has more freedom. Yeah. So basically you can do anything. . . . I feel proud that I'm in Canada right now because if I had to pick, I'd pick Canada. Everything's almost perfect here" (Brianna, female, mainland China).

It is worth mentioning that all five of the participants who came from mainland China – which, unlike Hong Kong, is under a one-child policy – were the only child in

their families before they left for Canada. And hence, a couple of participants from mainland China, who had since had new siblings, also perceived the addition of younger siblings into their families as one of the best things about living in Canada.

Although the participants had many positive comments about life in Canada, they were also quick to bring up what they did not like about living in Canada compared to their homelands. The weather in Canada, which many enjoyed in the summer, was most often identified as one of the bad things about living here during the winter months. As one child simply put it: "Canada is too cold" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong). Others also mentioned having "less kind of food, especially seafood" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong) available in Canada, compared to their homelands. A few others noted the higher living expenses in Canada, as stated by this child: "It's expensive here to buy things, like clothing items" (Angela, female, Hong Kong). The lack of extended family members in Canada was also cited by some as a "bad thing" about living in Canada. One child said: "I just don't like playing with nobody here because in China my, some of my cousins usually come. . . . I'd like to go to a park with my grandpa and my grandma [who are still living in China]" (Jessica, female, mainland China).

In summary, all participants perceived their lives as having changed for the better, in a variety of respects, since moving to Canada. Most of the participants cited the physical environment as the best thing about living in Canada. At the same time, they had fond memories of their lives before immigrating to Canada, mostly of the families and friends they left behind. The differences between living in the two countries were obvious to these children. The next theme to be presented will centre on the cultural differences between the two countries as perceived by these children.

Perceived Cultural Differences

The experience of living in two distinctly different cultures provided the participants with the opportunity to observe and compare the two and develop their own perspectives on how they differ. Their observations on cultural differences between Canada and their homelands were grouped into the following categories: (1) people in general, (2) children, (3) peers, (4) families, and (5) foreign-born and Canadian-born Chinese.

People in general.

In general, the most commonly cited difference between people in Canada and people in their homelands was that "Canadians are nicer" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). One component of the observed "niceness" was the respect shown for one another by the people in Canada. In one child's words: "Here everybody respect each other. So it's good" (Colby, male, mainland China). Another component was manner. One child gave an example of how people's manners were different in the two countries:

> In China they don't all have good manner. In Canada they do. Yeah, when you go out to the street, it's a big difference. Like, people in China, you know, they sell apples and oranges on the street, they just want you to buy them and they'd argue with you and things. In Canada, if you don't buy them, it's ok, they'd be just like, "Bye, have a good day." They don't usually spit on the ground or anything. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

The participants also perceived people's behaviours to be different in the two countries. The most notable differences were that people in Canada "speak different languages" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong) and "eat different things" (Devon, male, mainland

China). One child also noted that "Canadians are very relaxed" (Colby, male, mainland China). Another child attributed the differences in people's behaviours to differences in the norms of the two countries:

> [People in Canada] are more expressive. Like, they dye their hair like, wacky, and like, you know, they can pretty much do like anything. And no one will be like: "That guy's weird." It's like, in Chinese [culture] there's like a norm, so someone will expect you to do something. And like, not like, Mohawk or dying your hair . . . like wacky colours, like pink or purple. But here, you can do pretty much anything and no one will be like: "Oh, he's breaking the norm." . . . Here, everyone's more expressive, and everyone will be like: "That's so cool." And no one will be like: "Oh, look at him." (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

Differences in values, beliefs, and preferences were also noted by about half of the participants. For example, one child mentioned how people in Canada generally liked to live in houses, while people in mainland China enjoyed the conveniences of living in apartments. The following statement best sums up how the participants perceived these differences: "Some Canadians think that some things that Chinese people do is like weird. And Chinese people think Canadian people do some things that are just weird. Just a different culture" (Colby, male, mainland China).

Children.

In addition to noticing differences in the general population, the participants also specifically addressed the differences they noticed between children in the two countries. In their descriptions, the majority talked about the differences they saw in the behaviours of school children in the two countries: "In Canada they respect your feelings. When they

do something you don't like, you tell them and they'll respect your feeling and they won't do that" (Devon, male, mainland China). "They're different [in Canada]. They act different. They do things different. They just run around in class. . . . They were drawing instead of doing what they were told" (Tylor, male, mainland China). "In China . . . the students never make any jokes. Here, school is fun. People make jokes. They make me want to go to school . . . the students are also nicer" (Colby, male, mainland China). "In Hong Kong they're more feminine. Here it's just like, 'Let's play soccer,' and you'll be like, 'yeah'" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

The same child went on to illustrate the way in which Canadian society allowed more room or freedom for children's achievement than the Chinese society did:

> Chinese, they work harder, you know, but . . . they [only] extend to a certain power. But Canadians, they can extend more. Some people just work harder, well I guess it's in the difference of people. . . . [Children in Canada can push their limits more], if they love it, that is. Well, it's like, Chinese, if you love something, you can't really do it because someone expects a certain thing from you. Like, if you're smart, people think you should become a doctor, instead of like, if you're into sports and you want to become an athlete, but they'll be like: "You're so good at marks, don't waste your talent." But here, you know, it's different, you do what you love. So if you love sports, go ahead, be an athlete. And if you like helping people, then be a doctor.

Another child shared her thoughts on how the typical Canadian child and the typical Chinese child have different mentalities:

> Canadian children, they can just do whatever they do at school for free time. They like to play than study a little more than Chinese people. . . . A Chinese child, in my opinion, they are more bossy and perfect. They follow the rules of their parents much more. They do the things that they have to 100% do perfectly. And there's something in their mind that they have to be perfect. And Canadian, we just let it all go and have fun with studying or anything like that. You know, it doesn't matter if you break a finger or anything. We just basically live a happier life with more freedom . . . [unlike] the old Chinese kid way, being polite and shy but perfect. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

Peers.

In terms of friendships made in the two countries, the majority of the children did not find them to be different. The four children who did find their friendships in Canada to be different gave various reasons: "[My friends in Canada] know English and they know Cantonese. The friends in China only know Mandarin" (Devon, male, mainland China). "I didn't have much [friends] in Hong Kong. I had no choices" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). One child recalled the following about the friends she had when she was in mainland China:

> They were sort of much greedier, like I was. They wanted anything and everything they saw or something. Sort of ran around everywhere without caring where they were going or anything. It's less about the friendship than how we were together. . . . I express my feelings more to the friends that I have now. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

Another noted:

> I am better with my friends now than before in Hong Kong. Because here you get to have like, sleepovers, parties. But in Hong Kong . . . because it's like a different country and . . . Hong Kong is kind of [a] communist country, so it's like, everyone's the same and like, probably my first friends in Hong Kong are more obedient, like me. You can always talk about everything to them in Canada. . . . It's just like, normal to say, "how are you" to your friends in Hong Kong and talk about your relatives, but you don't talk about like, I don't know, what you have. But here you get to tell them like: "Oh, I have a motorcycle" or "Oh, I have a convertible." (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

Although the majority of the participants did not find any differences between their friendships made in Canada and those made back in their homelands, all of them spoke of differences that they noticed between their Chinese and non-Chinese friends in Canada. Besides the differences in school performance and work ethic previously discussed, the other most commonly cited difference related to hobbies. Half of them noted that playing sports was more popular among their non-Chinese friends. One child stated: "Canadians really like to play sports. Chinese people, they do some things, but not sports. Canadians, they spend most of the time playing sports" (Colby, male, mainland China). A few others mentioned how their non-Chinese friends had more luxuries, gatherings, and playtime in general. One child said the following about his non-Chinese friends:

> They have a lot more free time. . . . They have a lot more things: toys, video games, all that stuff. And they probably . . . go somewhere really late instead of

going to bed, or to their little parties. Or have their own parties. (Tylor, male, mainland China)

Communication was cited as another difference between Chinese and non-Chinese peers. Many participants found communications with their non-Chinese friends to be different in many respects from their Chinese friends' way of communicating: "[The non-Chinese] talk more, and they talk English, not Chinese" (Jessica, female, mainland China). "If [my non-Chinese friends] don't like something, they tell. But the Chinese friends, they don't" (Devon, male, mainland China).

The other differences noted between Chinese and non-Chinese peers were more culturally based, including: "They eat different food. Different style of working. They don't really celebrate Chinese New Year" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong). "The non-Chinese, they probably think a bit different. . . . They probably don't care about school as much. . . . [The Chinese,] all they think about is school" (Tylor, male, mainland China).

Families.

In addition to differences between their Chinese and non-Chinese friends, most of the participants also talked about differences between Chinese and non-Chinese families. The most striking difference appeared to be in parent-child relationships. Participants spoke of the more intimate, more open, and less authoritarian relationships that their non-Chinese friends shared with their parents: "They get along better with their parents. They talk more with their parents. We talk less" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). "They like to share their feelings [with their parents]" (Devon, male, mainland China). "They don't have so much fights [with their parents]" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong). "Their parents

are not as strict about them cuz of the way they grew up here" (Brianna, female, mainland China).

Another child illustrated the differences she had noticed in parental authority and expression of love within her non-Chinese friends' families compared to her own:

> It's different. It's like . . . they can talk back to their parents, you know, it's not like, most of my, well, half of my non-Chinese friends are like, they sometimes talk back to their parents. But at the same time, they're more loved. Like, they use the word "love," we Chinese parents don't usually use, and, yeah, that's probably the difference. More talk-backs and more talking about love. . . . Like every time they go out they'll be like, "Bye, mom" and like, "I love you." But here I'm just like, "I'm going out, bye." (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

Other minor differences that the participants noticed about non-Chinese families compared to their own related to everyday living and leisure time. As one participant said of his non-Chinese friends: "They talk English in their house and they do different stuff from ours. They eat different stuff" (Devon, male, mainland China). Another noted:

> Chinese families, they don't really, on weekends, they don't really go and have fun. Like they just stay home and do work and everything like that. They make their weekends stressful and things like that. Canadians, as long as they finish their work, at that moment they go outside and have fun. They like to have fun. Chinese, they all do too, but they know that it will make their life way easier if they keep on doing what they're doing. Canadians, they just know that you're done, OK, go have fun. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

As mentioned earlier, participants also noticed differences in rules between Chinese and non-Chinese families. The perception that non-Chinese families had more rules than Chinese families had was most commonly reported. As the interviews progressed, however, many participants began to elaborate on what they saw as the essential difference in rules between Chinese and non-Chinese families. In fact, they noted that the difference might not be a matter of quantity after all, but a matter of explicitness. As one child put it: "There aren't much rules in my family. It's just norms" (Angela, female, Hong Kong). Another child, who also described an absence of rules in his family, said much the same thing:

> Chinese people, they just expect each other to be more respectful or organized or whatever. . . . Chinese culture, norms. Canadian culture, probably rules. In my mind, in Canadian culture, what I think is that their parents need to tell their children what to do. But Chinese people, they don't. Sometimes, very little times, that you tell your children what to do. (Colby, male, mainland China)

It was evident from this child's statement that the subtle nature of Chinese parents' interaction with their children – and hence, the apparent absence of rules in these families – was culturally based. One child further illustrated how culture played a part in the difference between Chinese children's and non-Chinese children's compliances with rules:

> [Canadian children] WANT something for [following a rule], they see it as they're doing something FOR you, like you're hiring them or something. Chinese, they know it's part of what they have to do because their parents brought them up with responsibility. I suppose [Canadian parents also] do, but not as much. More

> freedom for the child. . . . Most of the time in Canada they always ask, "how much do I get paid" . . . and like, "what's my reward?" But Chinese, they . . . just agree [with their parents] cuz they understand. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

Foreign-born and Canadian-born Chinese.

The consensus of the participants was that the Chinese culture differs fundamentally from the Western-based Canadian culture in many respects. Half of the children, however, also noticed intra-cultural differences between foreign-born and Canadian-born Chinese. One child, for example, acknowledged that "Chinese people, they're in one [category], Canadians, they're in another category. So like, any Chinese, no matter if they're in Canada or the U.S., U.K., anywhere, they're still Chinese. Even if they're born in Canada, they're still Chinese" (Colby, male, mainland China). At the same time, this same child perceived Canadian-born Chinese to be "probably 60% Chinese and 40% Canadian." When asked about the attributes that differentiated the two groups of Chinese, one child said: "[The Canadian-born Chinese] would be more Canadian in their speaking" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). Another child offered her views on Canadian-born Chinese:

> Since their parents born them here, then they probably hang around with a lot of Canadians. They would have a best friend. They would like, interact with like, Canadians and they would know more around here. But they don't even know the norm in Chinese, so how are they supposed to act Chinese, you know, unless their mom or grandma want them to? But like, they don't even know the language, you know, because they were born here, unless their moms make them go to Chinese school or make them talk Chinese at home. . . . Sometimes they think

> differently. . . . They still mostly think like Chinese and they're still smart. They might have more Canadian friends than people who immigrated to Canada. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

This participant made it clear that the environment that a child grew up in was a major source of that child's knowledge of a certain culture. She also acknowledged that although there are some differences, academic excellence seemed to be a common denominator shared by the two groups of Chinese. One child went so far as to say that Canadian-born Chinese no longer resembled Chinese:

> They think weird. They're like Canadians. And they ARE Canadians. They don't seem like Chinese people. They're more like Canadian [in] the way they act [due to] how the environment affected them when they were growing up. They act like Canadians. They probably do things that a Chinese kid never does. Maybe in school they're more like Chinese. All the other ways they're more like Canadians. (Tylor, male, mainland China)

Another child, who also saw educational values as embedded in the Chinese culture, was quick to emphasize the especially important role played by traditional Chinese families in non-Chinese societies in passing on this aspect of culture. She said that the tradition of academic excellence might be lost in Chinese children raised in Canada "if their parents were also born here and their parents didn't teach them how to get good grades on everything, . . . they will just teach their child the Canadian way, which is like just do whatever you like" (Brianna, female, mainland China). The importance of parental teaching in the preservation of Chinese culture in a foreign-born

Chinese child was echoed by another participant: "If their parents would teach them, then they would be more Chinese" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong).

Feelings towards perceived cultural differences.

In addition to describing the differences they perceived in the two cultures, the participants also shared their feelings in regard to these differences. Most of the participants did not seem to attach especially strong feelings to the individual differences that they observed between Chinese and non-Chinese people. As one child said: "They probably know that because we're from a different country. They know that we're different" (Tylor, male, mainland China), while another stated: "I think I will still fit in, even though I am a Chinese; even I still think like a Chinese, I think I'll fit in" (Colby, male, mainland China).

When asked to comment on the differences between Chinese and non-Chinese families, many of the participants, however, expressed a sense of longing for their own families to become more "Canadian-like" in many respects such as in terms of the increased amount of sharing and openness observed in non-Chinese families: "I feel that they're lucky" (Jessica, female, mainland China). "I want to tell some feelings too sometimes [with my family]" (Devon, male, mainland China). Another child felt that her parents allowed her less freedom, compared to what non-Chinese parents allow: "Sometimes it's just like, I feel like I'm losing my friends because I can't do as much as Canadians, because Canadians' moms are just like, 'Yeah you can do that, you can do that'" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

In summary, the experience of living in two different cultural societies allowed the participants to discover how the two cultures differed both on the individual and on

the family unit level. Many also noticed differences within the Chinese culture when comparing foreign-born to Canadian-born Chinese. Although the majority of participants expressed a sense of longing for various cultural characteristics of non-Chinese families, the commonly expressed sentiment was one amounting to: "I think it's better in their families. But I still like my own family" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong).

As a wrap-up to the first part of this chapter, the next theme to be presented will consist of the participants' recollections of the highlights of their experiences.

Ups and Downs of Adaptation

At the time of the interviews, all of the participants seemed very comfortable with where they were at on their road to adaptation. They eagerly talked about the ups and downs that were part of their journeys, shared their thoughts on the difficulties that accompanied the process of migration and adjustment, and offered advice to future immigrant children based on their own experiences. They also looked ahead and described where they would like to see themselves in the future.

Difficulties.

Earlier in the chapter, I presented the difficulties that the participants encountered in the areas of language, peers, school, and family. There were also other difficulties that the participants faced along their adaptation journey. One child recalled: "It was hard when I came here. It was all different. Places were different. I didn't recognize any place. Then it became easier when I know how to get along with these people" (Devon, male, mainland China). While all of the participants quickly adapted to the Canadian culture in many ways, there were also aspects of cultural practice that were not easy for them to adapt to. One child said:

> [Adapting to the Canadian culture was] a bit hard and a bit easy. Like, if you want to eat Canadian food like pizza, in Hong Kong it costs so much, but here it's just like, five bucks. But like, yeah, like pizza is just easy to adapt [to]. But like broccoli, eating like, just that, it's like, it's so gross. I guess it just depends on your taste, cuz I just can't stand that broccoli; you see people just eating broccoli, I'm just like, "Don't you need to cook it?" (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

In addition to the aforementioned difficulties, many participants recalled how they often felt homesick and socially isolated during their early days in Canada: "It's hard because you miss some of the things that were in Hong Kong, the food and all" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong). "When I felt all alone I wish I could go back [to Hong Kong]" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). One child described the loneliness that she felt and the difficulties she faced in her effort to join in already-established friendship circles in the new country:

> I remember in grade four, I was like, away from the group. . . . And I felt really bad cuz I had no friends. . . . It's just like, they get to go to someone's house and I don't. Is it because I'm Chinese? Am I not friends with them enough? It's just that sometimes you feel left out, you know. . . . Sometimes I still feel left out because I can't do as much still, or because they have best friends and I don't, cuz I'm Chinese, I moved here and I don't have a lot of friends; like, I have a lot of friends, but I don't have a lot of best friends because they didn't know me until like, grade four. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

The majority of the participants believed that it was much more difficult for their parents to adapt to Canadian society. The most commonly cited difficulty for their

parents related to the lack of English proficiency. Some of the other difficulties included leaving behind prestigious jobs in their homelands and obtaining new employment in Canada: "I think it's harder for them because they have to find new jobs and they don't even know English very much" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong). "They had a really good job in China. But here they're still finding jobs" (Colby, male, mainland China). "They didn't go to school here, they didn't have anyone around them, and they had to get a new job, and they have to catch up with the language" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong).

The participants also noted the burdens and struggles that their parents were preoccupied with in the new land, as illustrated by this child: "[Moving was] harder for my parents cuz they had all these businesses like school and jobs and stuff. And they also had me. For me, I only had school and friends, that's it basically" (Brianna, female, mainland China). Another child thought it was relatively easy for children, compared to their parents, to adapt to a new culture:

> My parents have already [adopted] the life of Chinese and so, we still haven't, you know. We know how to act, but we haven't [adopted it]. And then when we came here, we started to adapt [to life in Canada.] (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

As the last statement implies, age at immigration made a difference in the relative difficulty in adjustment for the participants as compared to their parents, as further illustrated by the following statement: "[Moving was] harder for my parents because they were very old then and they didn't know the language very much while kids can still learn them" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong). This same child went on to say that because of their age, "saying goodbye to their family" was especially hard for his parents.

The participants generally felt that the earlier in life people migrated, the easier the adjustment would be. Most of them agreed that it would be easier for younger children to immigrate than for older ones. One child stated: "I think it's easier if they're younger because they start school earlier and they learn from there. And if you're older, there're some things that you miss and it's hard to catch up" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong). Another child gave the following rationale:

> Older kids, they've been in China longer, so they feel more like home in China. So it's pretty hard to adjust to a brand new atmosphere. But younger kids, they've only been in China for a couple of years, they're just getting to know life. You know, getting to know life while you're moving, that's good. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

Although there was a general consensus that adjustment to a new country would be easier for younger children than older ones, the participants also noted the downside of immigrating at an early age, as exemplified by this statement:

> Younger kids, it's easier to adapt to here. But if younger kids, they come here, they'll forget the Chinese culture. That's a bad thing. And older kids, it's harder to learn English or whatever, but they will still remember the Chinese culture. That's a good thing. (Colby, male, mainland China)

Some of the participants also felt that age at arrival had an effect on the likelihood that an immigrant would encounter discrimination. One child shared her thoughts on this issue:

> [Moving is easier for] younger kids definitely . . . you don't know what you're thinking because you wouldn't understand. You'd be like: "Oh, yea, fun!" And

> then you'll just play with others you know. You'll just be nice. You don't, it's not like: "Oh, you're Chinese, I'm not gonna talk to you." It's just like: "Oh, this is so fun" and then they'll be agreeing with you or disagreeing and then you'll become friends. . . . But older kids, you know more. So you'll be like: "Oh, she's Chinese, maybe she eats like, dogs or something like that," because they expect a certain thing, because they learned it. And they think that, you're Chinese so you're that. . . . People will judge you. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

From what the participants said, it seemed as if younger members of the host country generally lacked the knowledge on which prejudice was based and were therefore more accepting of newcomers. At the same time, the fact that older immigrants seemed to be less acculturated to the new society might also intensify the chances of being discriminated against, as the same child went on to add: "If you're born in China and you came here, that's where racism begins because . . . you ACT differently."

Although they were all newcomers and belonged to a racial minority group, the majority of the participants did not experience any racist discrimination against them since moving to Canada. Their acculturated behaviours, coupled with what they learned at school, seemed to discourage and prevent discrimination against them. In a typical report, one child stated:

> [I've never been teased,] probably because the teacher always, from kindergarten the teacher always told us to treat each other equally. But I still don't think I will [be teased] in junior high because I act like any other kid. And my friends, they weren't ever teased. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

Even the four participants who reported being teased as Chinese were quick to elaborate on their perception of the experience. Three of these children stated that the teasing quickly vanished as they became more and more adapted to the Canadian culture. The last child shrugged off these negative experiences by viewing it as just one category of the general bullying that went on in her school:

> Still now I get some racism against me because it's not even because I am Chinese, it's just them being bullies and use Chinese as an example, like: "Oh, Angela's Chinese." . . . It's not like they're just racist against Chinese. They are bullies. It's like, they don't like people being fat and they'll be like: "Oh, that guy's fat. This girl's fat." And they'll make fun of it. And I don't really care about them because why care what they think? (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

The highest and the lowest points.

In fact, none of the participants mentioned the experience of racism and discrimination as a major difficulty in their adjustment to Canadian life. For them, the most difficult thing about moving to and living in Canada related to language, moving away from what is familiar and adjusting to a new culture. Some of their most difficult experiences were as follows: "Leaving my family and friends in Hong Kong and the language, like we had to change to English. We had to catch up" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong). "To know how to get to places and stuff. Sometimes you get lost when you go outside" (Devon, male, mainland China). "Communicating with other people. It's really hard to communicate with other people" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). "Thinking the same way as Canadians" (Tylor, male, mainland China).

When asked what the happiest thing about their adaptation journey was, their recollections were dominated by the topic of friendships – making and spending time with friends – in Canada. The following are some of the depictions of their friendships – the highest points of their experience thus far in Canada:

> I had lots and lots of happy things, but the most important happy thing was right after my birthday. . . . My friend called and we went to my first ever baseball game, and I started to become obsessed with baseball players and stuff. . . . Cuz if it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be like this right now, I wouldn't be that outgoing and jumpy. And, yeah, I think that's what changed my brain a little bit, ever since that day on, because it was a great deal of difference; it made me become more confident with myself and much greater strength unlike before. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

> Since I moved here [the happiest thing is] that I got more friends that accept, accept who I am. I'm really happy about that. I wouldn't change anything if I can change it. . . . Because . . . some people even here have troubles finding friends. And like, it's not just like, immigrants, it's even Canadians who have trouble finding friends. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

The second most commonly cited happiest moment for the participants was the experience of going to different places. One participant described his best time in Canada to be "going to lots of places and like, going to places I never went and going to special places to play and stuff" (Devon, male, mainland China). One child considered the fact "that I know more English" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong) to be the best thing that had

happened to her since coming to Canada, while another recalled getting an unexpected award in school during the early days to be his happiest memory in Canada.

Experience thus far and general advice.

The immigration experiences of the participants were full of ups and downs. All of them seemed pretty satisfied, by and large, with their overall experience, with a typical report being: "Not quite fully but pretty good" (Angela, female, Hong Kong). None of them found themselves wishing that they had never moved to Canada. As one child put it: "That's probably impossible. I think I will never say that in my whole life" (Colby, male, mainland China). Another child, who appreciated the opportunity that her dad had to bring her family to Canada, agreed with this sentiment: "In Canada I'm very satisfied. I am very satisfied that my dad got the greeting to go to Canada cuz if I didn't go, my life would still be a bore, fixed. . . . You get to be more open here" (Brianna, female, mainland China).

When asked what advice they would give to children who were about to move to Canada from another country, the participants' responses reflected, to a certain extent, the difficulties they had personally encountered in their adaptation journey: "Big jackets, snow and the cold weather. And learning more English and knowing to get along with the people here. Get a smaller backpack" (Devon, male, mainland China). "Just stay calm and get to know their teacher and they'll probably learn [the language]" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong). "Learn English, or else it would be hard to communicate with other people" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). "You will sometimes get homesick, but you'll still love it here" (Angela, female, Hong Kong). "Enjoy it, let yourself go, learn the language" (Brianna, female, mainland China).

Future plans.

Participants' responses were divided when asked whether they would like to stay in Canada or go back to their home country in the future. Five of the children expressed the desire to stay in Canada. The most commonly cited reason for this preference was friendships, followed by the more pleasant weather in Canada. The other reasons cited by the children included the lack of Chinese proficiency and better experiences in Canada. The following statements depict their reasoning: "I have more friends here" (Jessica, female, mainland China). "I guess it's not being so hot in here" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong). "I don't really like it [in Hong Kong] because in summer, it's hot and wet and everything. I like the weather here" (Katelyn, female, Hong Kong). "I don't know Chinese much, and I don't want to leave my friends" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). "I had better experiences in Canada than I did in China. I don't wanna go back and say goodbye to another set of friendships. I'll get sick of that" (Brianna, female, mainland China).

Another four participants said they would like to go back to and live in Hong Kong or mainland China at some later stage of their lives. It was interesting that two of these participants, who were both female and both from Hong Kong, gave distinctly different reasons from the other two participants, who were both males and both from mainland China: "Because I kinda miss my grandma because she's in Hong Kong. And there're much more things, newer" (Scarlett, female, Hong Kong). "[Because in Hong Kong there are] more clothes to buy, more things to do" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). "To find a job, I'll probably go back to China. Cuz like, sometimes it's easier in China than here" (Colby, male, mainland China). "Probably I'd do better in China than I do here [in] every way . . . because I'm Chinese" (Tylor, male, mainland China).

The remaining two participants were undecided on this issue. One of them said that he had "never really thought of that before" (Devon, male, mainland China), while another child attributed her difficulty in deciding to the fact that "both [places] are really good" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

In summary, the participants' adaptation journeys were full of ups and downs, reflecting their passage through the many difficulties they faced. They all seemed quite satisfied with their experiences and well adjusted to Canadian life. The participants credited their young age at arrival for their relatively smooth adaptation. Their young age also seemed to act as a protecting or hindering factor in the minor, if any, negative effect that racism and discrimination had on the participants. Although sharing similar evaluations of their experiences to date, the participants were split when it came to their future plans. Some of them expressed the desire to stay in Canada, others longed to return to their homelands, and a couple of others were uncertain as to which country they would eventually like to call home.

Summary: Their Overall Journey

In the first part of the chapter, I traced the paths created by these participants as they made the transition to Canada and to Canadian life. Step by step, the participants spoke of the various emotions and expectations they held before and on their arrival in Canada; their adaptation, in which the variables language, peers, school, and family emerged as salient areas of their road to adjustment to Canadian life; and their perceptions of the two countries that they had called home, and of Canada's people and culture in comparison to their homelands', as well as the significant highlights of their journeys. Overall, the participants talked about their unique experiences in positive terms.

At the same time, they acknowledged the range of obstacles that they had confronted as they gradually gained mastery of life in the new country.

The process of adapting to Canadian life for these immigrant children, however, involved more than a chronological chain of events. This process had a significant impact on their sense of who they were, who they are, and who they were to become. Their construction, reconstruction, and articulation of identity reflected an interaction between their daily experience in the new Canadian society and the traditional Chinese culture that accompanied them and their families to Canada from their homeland. The next part of this chapter will look at these children's negotiation of their changing identity as they portrayed the meaning of their experiences from their unique perspectives.

Making Sense of the Experience: Negotiation of a Changing Identity

What does it mean to be a Chinese immigrant child growing up in Canada? Through the eyes of the participants, this part of the chapter will look at the process of developing an identity in a society in which they constitute a minority. Three sub-themes emerged from the data: (a) ethnic identity – in which the various components of their ethnic identity will be explored; (b) fluidity of identity – which will highlight the dynamic nature of participants' identity, as well as its components, across contexts and time; and (c) self-evaluation – in which the participants will share their thoughts on their self-esteem and self-growth, and on being different.

It should be noted that the initial interview guide itself did not contain any questions that addressed participants' identity. As these concerns arose naturally throughout the initial interviews, questions were later added to specifically ask for their

views on this topic. Hence, data presented in this part of the chapter came from only a subset of the original sample, specifically, from nine of the original 11 participants.

Ethnic Identity

Four major components were evident as the participants presented their sense of ethnic identity: (a) self-identification; (b) sense of belonging; (c) attitudes towards one's ethnicity; and (d) ethnic involvement.

Self-identification.

Although the participants in this study shared the same heritage and similar backgrounds, they differed in how they chose to articulate their identity in the new country. The manner in which they presented their self-identifications ranged from certainty to ambivalence and confusion.

To three participants, their ethnicity-based self-identity was something they took for granted. The stability of their sense of self was evident insofar as they presented their self-identification in a matter-of-fact manner. As one participant stated: "I am Chinese" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). Another participant, who also identified himself as Chinese, demonstrated his commitment to his ethnicity-based self-identification despite anticipated changes to his citizenship: "Even if I become a Canadian [citizen], nah, Chinese. . . . I definitely will not say that I'm a Canadian" (Colby, male, mainland China).

For the other participants, the conversations about their identity reflected a sense of ambiguity on the issue, either verbally or nonverbally. For a couple of participants, their responses reflected a leaning towards adopting a Canadian identity without exclusively identifying themselves as such, as exemplified by one of the children's statements: "I sort of think that I'm more Canadian" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong).

Another two participants reported some form of combination of Chinese and Canadian identities, albeit of varying levels of each. One participant's articulation of self-identity appeared to reflect a sense of ambivalence. When the topic initially came up in the interview, she stated: "I'm moving to [becoming Canadian], but I still want to stay in between. So I kinda want to be a Chinese-Canadian" (Angela, female, Hong Kong). As the interview progressed, she showed a sense of confusion as she struggled to clarify her self-identification: "I'm half-Chinese, well, I am Chinese. But like, I wouldn't say I'm Canadian, I'll just say I'm Chinese. . . . Because I'm Chinese and I want to stay Chinese, you know, but I also want to be half-Canadian." Part of the ambiguity and conflict in this participant seemed to stem from her awareness of the difference between her administrative-political identity and her ethnic identity, as she went on to say:

> You have to do like, assessments and tests before you're Canadian. So I'm not officially Canadian yet, but I guess I'm becoming one. . . . [To call myself] Canadian, I have to get my citizenship, so it kinda has to make sense to say that. But I do feel that I'm a Canadian, but I'm not in a way. So after I get my citizenship, then I will say that I am a Chinese-Canadian.

The other participant who reported a hybrid identity also acknowledged her immigrant background as part of who she was: "I'm a Chinese-Canadian, I'm a Canadian immigrant" (Brianna, female, mainland China). This participant, however, downplayed her background as Chinese and did not see her ethnicity as important to her self-identity: "I don't think anyone can tell the difference right now [as to whether I'm Chinese or not.] . . . I'm mostly balancing on Canada right now, but [being] Chinese, it's only, it comes to a time when I HAVE to [be like a Chinese]." Although this participant's hybrid self-

identification seemed to stem, at least in part, from a sense of rejection of her Chinese heritage, to her, it was a positive self-perception. When asked what it meant for her to be a Chinese-Canadian, she said: "It means a big deal. I mean, I'm now from two countries that I lived in. And that's always better than one, cuz of the experiences. And it means a quite happy life for me."

Sense of belonging.

Closely linked to their self-identifications was the participants' sense of belonging to their ethnic group. In addition to differences in their portrayal of self-identity, the participants also varied in the importance that they gave to their Chinese ethnicity. For some participants, again, the importance of their Chinese ethnicity was a taken-for-granted matter. In the words of one child: "It is important that I keep the Chinese part in me . . . I AM a Chinese" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). Another child, who also saw his ethnicity as an important part of who he was, stated that maintaining his Chineseness was both important and desirable: "[Keeping the Chinese in me] is important AND I would like to. It's not really that it's important that I do it. It's I would like to do it" (Colby, male, mainland China).

Other participants did not seem to put such a heavy emphasis on their ethnicity. As one child stated: "[Being Chinese] is just part of the multicultural [Canada]" (Angela, female, Hong Kong). Another participant also downplayed the importance of her Chinese ethnicity: "Chinese and non-Chinese people, it doesn't really matter to me anymore. They're just equal" (Brianna, female, mainland China).

Another indicator of their sense of belonging was the sense of "peoplehood" that they portrayed towards their own ethnic group. This sense of "peoplehood" was

especially apparent through the way the participants assigned the usages of the pronouns "we" and "they," which respectively signified the group they saw themselves as a member of and the group they viewed as "the other." The sense of belonging to the ethnic Chinese group was evident in the following statements in which the participants linked the group to the pronoun "we": "My Chinese friends, we probably think the same way. The non-Chinese, they probably think a bit different" (Tylor, male, mainland China). "Canadians get like, 89%, they're so proud. But if we get 89%, not that good" (Colby, male, mainland China). Another participant, on the other hand, demonstrated her sense of identification with the non-Chinese group: "The Chinese, you know, they always want to get good grades, cuz that's the way Chinese think. . . . And Canadian, we just let it all go and have fun with studying or anything like that" (Brianna, female, mainland China).

This same participant further asserted her sense of belonging to the "other" group in that she consciously distinguished herself from children of her own heritage:

> I act like I'm not a Chinese anymore. . . . My Chinese friends, I think I'm different because they are more responsible than I am. . . . Yeah, I'm just not like them that way. And I'm more crazy than them, I talk more than them, and I'm just more open than them. They are shy sometimes. I'm not as shy.

Attitudes.

A third component of these children's ethnic identity was their attitudes towards their ethnic group. The discussion on the topic was dominated by the participants' positive attitudes towards being Chinese, namely, their pleasure in and contentment with being Chinese: "I still have patriotism. I still like the Chinese better" (Colby, male,

mainland China). "I like being Chinese. That's what makes me different from them. . . . I'm happy being a Chinese" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

Essential to the development of their attitudes towards the Chinese ethnicity were the messages that the participants perceived about the value or desirability in identifying oneself as Chinese. For the most part, these messages seemed to range from neutral – "My friends here are very nice to me. They respect me and they don't really care that I'm Chinese" (Devon, male, mainland China) – to positive – "I think at least most of them [have a good image of Chinese people]. Like 90%. No, like, 95 or 98% would have a good image. Cuz first of all, they're smart" (Colby, male, mainland China). Another child gave the following description of what she perceived to be the general impression that people in Canada had of Chinese people: "Good at math. Good at cooking Chinese food. Good at study. Good learning. Good learning skills" (Brianna, female, mainland China).

The participants did not seem to be bothered by the stereotype that others had of Chinese people. In fact, they took pride in this stereotypical image of Chinese people. One child said the following of her Chinese heritage: "It makes me feel good, special" (Brianna, female, mainland China). Another child, who seemed to feel much the same way, spoke of how being Chinese helped raise his self-confidence "because every other Chinese is smart" (Colby, male, mainland China).

Not all of the participants saw their ethnicity as being perceived positively. One participant, for instance, in noting the positive treatment that she received from her non-Chinese peers, also hinted at a sense of being an exception, of having an atypical status among Chinese immigrants: "It's just like they treat me normal as if I'm not from Hong Kong or anything" (Angela, female, Hong Kong). She also went on to show how the

Chinese ethnicity was deemed undesirable among some of her Chinese peers: "You don't find a lot of people [who] like being Chinese here. Well, not, not my friends."

Ethnic involvement.

The fourth component of the participants' ethnic identity was the various aspects of their ethnic involvement that seemed to be most easily and comfortably identified by the participants. The dominant aspect of this component related to their language usage. For their interviews, ten out of the 11 participants chose to use English, with the understanding that they were to talk about their experience as Chinese immigrant children. Most participants also reported using English as their main language of communication, as stated by one child: "I speak more English than Cantonese" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong). The predominant usage of English was especially marked when it came to communicating with peers, as they reported using the English language with "any friends, even if they're Chinese" (Colby, male, mainland China).

Chinese was the mother tongue for all of the participants. The extent to which they were making an effort to maintain their cultural language, however, varied a great deal. These efforts ranged from minimal – "I mean, I can still speak Chinese, only when I have to" (Brianna, female, mainland China) – to active – "I have to study my Chinese, because if I don't study my Chinese, I'll forget it" (Colby, male, mainland China).

Another major indicator of their ethnic involvement was the participants' friendship patterns. As mentioned earlier, most of the participants acknowledged the importance, in a variety of respects, of peers who were Chinese. One child explicitly tied his preference for Chinese friendships to his ethnicity: "I can still relax with Canadians, but not as much as Chinese because I'm still a Chinese" (Colby, male, mainland China).

Some of the participants also expressed their identity through a number of cultural elements, such as food, traditional celebrations, or even leisure activities: "I eat [what] English people eat, like macaroni and stuff" (Jessica, female, mainland China). "We practically only celebrate Chinese New Year. We don't really celebrate Christmas" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong). "[I find myself] getting more [into] the sports" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). Length of residency in Canada was also taken by one participant as evidence of her identity: "[I am] more Canadian because I've lived in Canada for four or three years" (Jessica, female, mainland China).

Race.

Interestingly, none of the participants stated that their race, or physical appearance, was an important part of their identity. As one child put it: "I don't really think about it" (Brianna, female, mainland China). All but one of the participants who were asked did not think that other children would look at them as different because of how Chinese people looked. The school curriculum seemed to have a big impact on the way children perceived racial differences among themselves. The same child went on to add:

> Cuz the teachers at school, we celebrate this day, it's called Multicultural Day, we celebrate all the kids around the world. At school there're lots of different cultural kids, so we learned to treat people equally other than skin colour or how they talk or something. . . . Their insides are the same. We're all the same people.

Only one participant recalled remarks made by a peer that were directed at her physical attributes:

> I remember this guy, he was in my drama production. And he'd be like, I remember so strongly, and he did this (pulling back the corners of her eyes) and said, "Oh I'm a Chinese." And I was just like, "What? Are you saying that our eyes are smaller?" And I didn't get it. And my friends were just like, "That was low. That was low." Like that was mean. And like, he's just like, "Oh, OK" cuz he's like, "I don't know if you like this joke or not, it's kinda mean but kinda like, funny." (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

As strong as this memory was for this participant, it did not seem to have any negative impact on her. When asked how she felt about her peer's remarks, she said: "Everyone's different you know. They have different eyes. I saw this Chinese singer who has these really big eyes. So I didn't take that seriously because I think my eyes are perfectly fine." Although race was not an important component of their sense of identity, the participants acknowledged that their physical appearance was what signalled their ethnicity, as illustrated by the following statements: "Even though I don't feel different, I know I look different" (Brianna, female, mainland China). "[By my Chinese looks,] people know that I am" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong).

Fluidity of Identity

The participants' ethnic identity or its components described above were not fixed. It was evident from the discussions that their identity was dynamic and that different aspects of their identity were constantly changing across both contexts and time.

Family influence.

Regardless of their sense of identity, all of the participants perceived lives inside and outside the family to be culturally different. Because of the differences in

acculturation patterns, the participants viewed their parents to be more traditional than they were and, hence, to be less adapted to the Canadian lifestyle: "[They are] more Chinese [than I am.] They have more contacts with Chinese people than Canadians. And they don't really know much English words" (Ryan, male, Hong Kong). "They still eat the same stuff and do the same things [as they did in Hong Kong]" (Elenor, female, Hong Kong). "[They] never changed to Canadian" (Colby, male, mainland China).

In addition to adhering to the Chinese traditions, the participants' parents also wanted to ensure that the participants stayed close to their cultural roots. For some participants, their parents' message was implicit. As one child put it: "[They want me to] probably stay like Chinese" (Tylor, male, mainland China). For others, the message from their parents was explicit and came across loud and clear. One participant described her mother's constant reminders of the importance of maintaining the Chinese heritage: "My mom always tells me that I'm Chinese, don't forget that. And I already know that" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

While some of the expectations from their parents seemed to be minimal – "[My parents want me] only to keep speaking [Chinese] and not forget about it" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong) – some parents monitored their children's changing identity more closely. For one participant, her family's constant disapproving comments about her changing identity led to a sense of guilt as well as conflict with her family:

> My mom, well, my family, doesn't want me to go into too much Canadian because they know that I've grown more into Canadian ways now. And they, they say that every week and it's just like, "You know, don't be, don't be too much Canadian." . . . I know I'm Chinese, but . . . your mom and your relatives just

> keep saying about it . . . and yesterday my aunt was like, "Oh, now Angela is becoming more Canadian now, eh?" And I felt really bad because I'm not, in a certain way. I'm not, but I'm kind of. . . . So sometimes I take a step back, but they also have to take a step back. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

As a result of their parents' adherence to traditional norms, all of the participants reported a more, if not exclusively, Chinese-oriented lifestyle at home compared to that of the outside world: "We live like Chinese in our home" (Tylor, male, mainland China). "At home, it's just like, since I'm Chinese, and we talk in Chinese, we eat Chinese food. So . . . it's like being home in Hong Kong" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

Across contexts.

In addition to having different lifestyles in and outside of the family, the participants also expressed the sentiment that they were leading two different lives across many other contexts. In response to the different cultural settings they encountered on a daily basis, the participants learned to switch behavioural modes according to the cultural context of the situation. For example, although the majority of participants reported using their cultural language within the family, English was the main language for communication outside of the family. For one participant, the ratio of Chinese to Western components in their lives was distinct and clear: "I just act half Canadian, half Chinese" (Colby, male, mainland China). For others, that ratio was fluid and varied with the situation and context. One participant described a continuous process of selecting culturally specific characteristics or behaviours in different cultural settings:

> Like with my mom, I have to act not like Canadians, right? So it depends where I am. If I'm in my house, or at someone's Chinese house, then I have to be polite

> and be like, Chinese. And like, when I'm in anywhere else in Canada, I will act like Canadian. I'll be like, "YEAH!" Cuz I like, I like being loud and, well, I AM loud. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

This same child went on to demonstrate how her identity, in addition to shifting with the context, also varied with location:

> Since I'm being here, I might be feeling more Canadian. But if I was in Hong Kong, I would definitely feel more Chinese. So it depends where I am. Or if I'm even in like, France or something like that, I would feel like half-Chinese and half-Canadian. So it's like equal. But it depends on the place.

In addition to making an effort to be culturally and contextually appropriate, one participant also noted the use of compartmentalization as a reconciliation strategy for living between two cultural realities: "My actions become Canadian, but my mind stays Chinese" (Tylor, male, mainland China).

Across time.

Time seemed to have different effects on the participants' sense of identity. During the course of their adjustment, the majority of participants expressed increasing identification with being Canadian. When asked when she started feeling that she was becoming Canadian, one participant stated:

> I felt that when I was getting really used to speaking English. It was like, in grade two or three. I felt that because I felt a change . . . I think in English now. So I felt a change. Because when I was in grade one and the beginning of grade two, I still thought in Chinese. I only spoke English when I had to . . . I think when they begin to think in the language, in English, then they know that they're actually in

> Canada. When I thought in English, I just thought, I forgot about China, I just thought Canada was my country. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

One participant, on the other hand, after an initial period of dissociating herself from her ethnic identity, reported increasing identification with her Chinese heritage as a result of her experiences in Canada. The following statement made by this participant was especially telling because not only did it involve the negotiation process of her identity, but also illustrated the importance of peers or role models in developing one's identity:

> At first I came here, I really, I really hated Chinese, I hated being different. . . . But when I heard those Chinese guys [at church] saying, "Yeah, I'm proud of being Chinese," it just raised my confidence [in] being Chinese more. And I want to share that with my other Chinese friends that, yeah, I'm happy being a Chinese. (Angela, female, Hong Kong)

Still another participant reported that his sense of identity did not change as a result of coming to Canada, stating that he "didn't change. . . . Still Chinese. Still follow Chinese culture" (Colby, male, mainland China).

Self-Evaluation

Although the challenges were evident, living between two cultures also gave the participants unique opportunities for changes and growth, as well as new ways of perceiving things. This last section of the chapter will look at the impact that their adaptation experiences and changing identity had on their self-evaluation. Given that questions on their self-evaluation were a last-minute addition to the interview guide,

views from only the four participants who were interviewed a second time will be presented.

Positive self.

All four participants reported subjective high self-esteem. Three of them perceived their self-esteem to be higher than that of most children's, while the other one reported a level of self-esteem that was about the same as other children's. For three of the participants, peers played a major part in how good they felt about themselves: "I feel high [when] everyone wants to hang out with me" (Angela, female, Hong Kong). "I guess some other kids, if they get teased, they sort of have a depression over themselves. But I don't get teased, so I feel really good . . . it depends how other people treat me" (Brianna, female, mainland China). The fourth participant attributed his above-average self-esteem to his academic achievement.

Self-growth.

The sub-theme of self-growth was evident in the children's conversations. One participant spoke of forming a more independent self through his experiences in Canada: "I am more independent now" (Jordan, male, Hong Kong). Another participant described herself as more expressive than she was when she first came to Canada: "I'm trying to be as different as possible" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

The third child said that life in Canada afforded him the opportunity to discover his own talents: "When I came to Canada, I draw so good, but in China I never noticed that cuz in China, there's no spare time" (Colby, male, mainland China). The other participant talked about growth in strength, assertiveness, and confidence since coming to Canada:

> When I was in China I was so weak. Anyone who would touch me and I would like, fall down or something. And I was always shy and everyone can bug me. Now it's changed complete different. . . . I feel way more confident in myself, because I've grown stronger mentally and physically . . . I feel I have more power in a way. I can stand up for myself. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

On being different.

The children also touched on what it meant for them to be different. Difficult as it was for these children to live their lives as members of both the immigrant and ethnic minority groups, they had moved on and chose to see the positive in their situations. Of their Chinese ethnicity and minority status, one child stated: "I guess that's the way I look at Chinese now. I want to be different from everyone else and I'm happy with that" (Angela, female, Hong Kong).

Another participant shared her thoughts on the positive aspects, affectively and pragmatically, of being a Chinese immigrant child in Canada:

> I am very happy. There are lots of kids in China and not all of them get this opportunity to see a better country. Yeah, I feel proud that I'm in Canada right now. . . . Because, you know, even though I act everything like a Canadian, I'm still from and part of a different country. And it just makes me feel special because there're more opportunities, like getting a job or going back to China to do something. (Brianna, female, mainland China)

Summary: Their Identity Negotiation

In summary, all the participants whose views were presented in this section identified with both their original heritage and the new Canadian experience, although to

varying degrees. For these children, the ongoing negotiation of their identities involved finding a middle ground where they could incorporate selected aspects of both cultures. In this process, some aspects of their Chinese and immigrant identities were retained, while others were modified and adapted to ensure their full engagement with Canadian society. These children actively constructed a dynamic, fluid sense of identity across both time and contexts. They were not only aware of the differences between the two cultural worlds in which they found themselves embedded, but also developed the flexibility to reduce the ambiguity and cultural dissonance they faced.

In short, a range of identities was expressed by these children who shared the same ethnic minority and immigrant status. The participants seemed to be at different stages of identity development. Most of them experienced changes in their identity during the course of adjustment. A hint of gender difference arose in that the boys reported a more stable sense of identity centred on their Chinese ethnicity, whereas the girls appeared to be struggling in their efforts to develop a coherent sense of self. Also of some concern was the lack of parental support or approval reported by a few participants for their acculturated selves. These children experienced internal tension and dissonance in that they seemed to be pulled in one direction by the desire or need to fit into the larger Canadian society, while simultaneously being pressured to maintain their traditional selves because of parental expectations.

Regardless of their identity, all participants acknowledged that their lives were an integration of both Chinese and Canadian components. Their stories suggested that learning to live with two cultures is a highly individualized and context-dependent process. A common theme among their unique experiences was the interrelatedness of

various aspects of their lives. Their sense of ethnic identity had an impact on the way they approached the various aspects of adaptation to Canadian society; at the same time, their adaptation informed their identity negotiation in an ongoing manner. In forging a new identity, these children found unique yet adaptive ways of integrating the different components of their experiences with their perceptions of their essential selves in this multicultural society – their new home.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion and Conclusion

The use of the qualitative method in this study has allowed for an in-depth exploration and documentation of Chinese immigrant children's experiences in Canada, both in terms of commonalities and individual differences. It also provided the participants with the opportunity to share their experiences, which led to the emergence of the topic of identity construction and negotiation. This unexpected outcome was critical in creating a more comprehensive and meaningful portrait of their experiences. Overall, immigration was a positive experience for these children. Although everyone experienced a period in which he or she struggled with adaptation, mostly in the areas of language, peers, school, and family, all appeared to be well adapted to Canadian society and doing well. This finding is consistent with other research (e.g., Beiser et al., 1998; Hungsinger et al., 1998; Ma, 2002) that found that immigrant children were well adjusted to their host society and doing at least as well as the majority culture children.

In addition to the nine distinct themes - (a) emotions and expectations surrounding the move to Canada ; (b) language; (c) connecting with Canadian peers; (d) school; (e) post-immigration family life; (f) comparisons of life in the two countries; (g) perceived cultural differences; (h) ups and downs of adaptation, and (i) ethnic identity - that emerged from the data, the participants' stories also highlighted the distinctiveness of each of their experiences, the variance of response to the effects of migration, and the interconnectedness of different aspects of their experiences. All participants – coming from the predominantly Chinese society of mainland China and Hong Kong to the

Western-based multicultural Canada – undertook a similar journey, both in terms of the circumstances and the struggles they faced. Their experiences, however, not only illustrated the similar paths they experienced, but also revealed the many different trails that these children created in their efforts to adapt to Canadian society.

In this chapter, I will first present an overview of the findings and their significance in light of the present literature. This overview will be followed by the limitations of the study. The last section will discuss directions for further research and the implications of the findings from this study.

Overview of Findings

From the findings, it is clear that a number of critical stages were involved in the immigration process for all participants. The children described a journey that began in the homeland with the experience of emotions and expectations that surrounded their anticipated move to Canada. Although their description of this time period was dominated by positive and energetic terms, a sense of fear at the lack of English proficiency and a sense of sadness at the loss of extended family were also evident.

After arrival, the children eagerly greeted the many novelties that this country has to offer as their new home. Their adaptation process was an ongoing accumulation of experiences in many interconnected domains. The four main domains that emerged from the data were language, peers, school, and family. The first day of school in Canada proved to be a critical juncture in their adaptation because it exposed them to the reality of being a newcomer, of lacking English proficiency, and of being different. The participants demonstrated how strong an emotional impact that the niceness of Canadian peers and teachers had on them by acknowledging the important role they played in

learning English and in learning about Canadian life. Their gradual competence in English skills not only served as a sense of accomplishment for these children, it also became a tool to overcome the sense of frustration, confusion, dependency, and social isolation that characterized their early days of adaptation. Language became an important symbol of their identity as their bilingual capability signifies both their cultural allegiances to Chinese culture, mostly within the home setting, and their degree of adaptation or involvement with the larger Canadian society.

It was evident that peers, both Chinese and non-Chinese, played a prominent role in these children's lives. At the same time, the participants acknowledged the special bond that they shared with their Chinese peers due to similar backgrounds and experiences. Without exception, all children expressed a sense of preference for the Canadian school system over that of mainland China or Hong Kong, the main reasons given being less pressure and the more friendly teacher-student relationships in Canada. Although a few children reported having been teased by their peers, none of them identified racism and discrimination to be a major concern. The participants repeatedly cited the multicultural nature of Canadian classrooms, learning the language, and absorbing the Canadian culture as helping them to fit in and feel accepted. They spoke of some of the differences exhibited in school performance and work ethics between Chinese and non-Chinese classmates. The participants, however, differed on their views on the connection between their Chinese ethnicity and superior academic achievement: while some of them were aware of and attempted to live up to the standards of the "model minority" stereotype, others simply dismissed such a connection and instead, emphasized the value of equal treatment for all by the teachers and personal efforts by the students.

In terms of post-immigration family life, the children did not report a consistent pattern of change in openness, communication, or time spent with family. Explicit family conflicts did not arise as a concern for the participants. A key family issue for them seemed to be the lack of comprehension of English language and of Canadian culture by their parents. The subsequent communication problems and lack of understanding among family members that arose created the ground for potential conflicts in the future as these children became increasingly proficient and knowledgeable with both the language and the culture of the mainstream Canadian society.

Looking back at their experience, all participants expressed satisfaction with their adaptation and with their new lives in Canada, recounting the many ups and downs, accomplishments, as well as their overcoming of many difficulties. They appreciated the opportunity to learn about the cultural differences between the two countries and embraced the virtues of both, while holding onto the fond memories of their homelands. The participants credited their age of arrival for their relatively smooth adaptation: they were young enough to learn the language and integrate easily, yet not too young as to forget about or lose touch with their Chinese roots.

With the help of their increasing English skills and exposure to the larger Canadian culture, these children became active participants in their own adaptation and attached unique meanings to their journey. In particular, they constructed, reconstructed, and negotiated a sense of ethnic identity for themselves in the midst of two different cultural worlds, each with a separate set of rules and expectations, and developed the flexibility to competently function in both. The construct of the participants' sense of

ethnic identity as well as its development were both complex and sometimes conflictual, especially when they received little family support for their developing hybrid identities.

In sum, findings from this study reveal both the significance and the intricate relationship of adaptation and identity issues in these preadolescent children's experiences. Through their stories, patterns and differences in their journeys emerged and they will now be discussed in light of the present literature.

The Adaptation Experience of Chinese Immigrant Children

The pattern of these immigrant children's adaptation yielded three groups of factors or elements that were central to their adaptation experience: (1) the personal characteristics of the participants and the situational variables surrounding their immigration; (2) the actual experiences of adapting to Canadian life; and (3) the significance of their experiences.

Personal and Contextual Variables

The first group of factors is comprised of the participants' personal characteristics and the contextual or situational variables surrounding their migration. These factors, as Berry (1997) pointed out, moderate the nature and extent of the difficulties that immigrants might encounter in their adaptation to the new country. The three factors that are most relevant to the participants' experiences in this study are age, context of migration, and society of settlement.

Age.

The age of arrival has been considered as one of the most important factors in immigrant adaptation. Research has consistently demonstrated that children acculturate faster than adults do and that preadolescent children, in turn, tend to experience less

adaptation problems than older children do (Garcia Coll & Magunson, 1997; Mena et al., 1987; Padilla et al, 1986; Sam & Berry, 1995; Seat, 2003). All of the participants in this study arrived in Canada between the ages of four and nine. Their young ages, as Guarnaccia and Lopez (1998) suggested, make them both more vulnerable and more resilient in the face of changes wrought by migration: their vulnerability stems from their dependence on others to negotiate the migration process and their own lack of cognitive development and knowledge to help understand and integrate the changes involved. At the same time, their flexibility, their ability to learn new languages, and their naïveté all may protect them from some of the negative consequences of migration.

Furthermore, younger immigrants are at an advantage in terms of successful adaptation, as there are more opportunities for them than for those who immigrate at a later age to learn about the Canadian society, especially through the school system; in addition, adjustment to cultural differences is usually easier for them, given that young immigrants are less entrenched in the culture of their homeland (Anisef & Murphy Kilbride, 2003). At first glance, it might seem as if this group of young immigrants would be susceptible to adaptation problems, but as Garcia Coll and Magnuson (1997) noted, they are, in many ways, buffered by their young ages against potential stressors brought about by the migration process.

Context of migration.

All of the participants and their families in this study were voluntary immigrants – migrants whose motivations for migration were mostly proactive, with the intention of seeking a better future. Research has found this group of immigrants to experience less adaptation difficulties than refugees do, or migrants whose motivations for migration are

mostly reactive (Berry & Kim, 1988; Wong-Rieger & Quintana, 1987). For example, refugee children – many of whom experienced pre-migration trauma, left their homelands due to fear and violence, and faced separation with their families as a result – tend to be at higher risk for mental health problems during their adaptation than those who immigrated voluntarily with their families (Beiser et al., 1995). Leung (2001) found that Chinese adolescent migrants in Canada and Australia with a proactive background performed better academically than those with a reactive background. The participants in this study had little say, due to their young ages, in the decision-making process and the actual arrangement for migration. Nevertheless, the predominance of positive emotions and expectations surrounding the participants' preparation for the journey to Canada reflected the positive context of their immigration process, a context that enabled these children to prepare positively for the many changes and challenges that were to become part of their adaptation.

Society of settlement.

The third factor that plays a role in immigrant adaptation is the society of settlement – its level of cultural tolerance and the social conditions of its ethnic and immigrant groups (Berry & Kim, 1988). Canada provides an ideal context for the resettlement of Chinese and other immigrant groups. In addition to its policies supportive of multiculturalism, this country has a sizeable Chinese-speaking population. Canadian multiculturalism, with its emphasis on the preservation of cultures, as well as its commitment to pluralism and integration, provides immigrants with the option of retaining their heritages, giving them up in pursuit of assimilation, or living their lives with elements of both their past and their present cultures without the pressure of having

to commit to any particular strategy (Beiser, 1999). As Beiser further noted, since having the option is presumably good for mental health, the multiculturalism policy of Canada would appear to be more conducive to successful and healthy adaptation than the policies offered by other settlement societies, such as the "melting-pot" ideology in the United States. Chinese immigrants in Canada also have ready access to the social support and lifestyle options provided by a large ethnic Chinese community (Leung, 2001). Indeed, the experience of many participants in this study underlined the importance of having Chinese-speaking peers at school to help them through the early days of adaptation.

In sum, the young ages of the participants at the time of immigration, the positive context surrounding their immigration, as well as the society of settlement their families chose, all seemed to facilitate their eventual adaptation in Canada.

Adaptation Experience

The second group of factors concerns the participants' actual adaptation experiences in Canada. Four salient elements that emerged from the interviews – language, peers, school, and family – will be discussed.

Language.

English language acquisition has long been identified as an important factor in facilitating adaptation in Western societies (B. K. Lee & Chen, 2000; Janzen, Ochocka, & Sundar, 2001; Rumbaut, 1991). Results from this study confirm those found in other studies that showed learning English to be a highly significant and immediate challenge for immigrant children (e.g., Janzen & Ochocka, 2003; Seat, 2003; Swagler & Ellis, 2003; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). In the process of learning English, the participants experienced confusion, guilt, and frustration. They accomplished the task with help from

teachers, peers, and even the mass media. The time frame of one to two years that they took to acquire a functional level of English paralleled the findings of Irving, Benjamin, and Tsang's (2000) study with Chinese immigrant adolescents in Toronto.

Although all participants followed similar paths in gaining English proficiency, some experienced more difficulties than others. Their self-confidence with English – defined by Pak, Dion, and Dion (1985) as a variable indicative of "high ratings of English proficiency and the absence of anxiety when speaking English" (p. 369) – also differed greatly from one individual to another. Pak and her colleagues, in their study with Chinese-Canadian students in Toronto, found this variable to be positively related to the students' level of linguistic assimilation into Canadian society as well as to their psychological adjustment. In the current study, the variable appeared to be related to the level of difficulty the participants perceived themselves as having encountered in learning English: the higher the level of confidence in their English language ability, as displayed during the interview, the less they perceived learning English to be a major difficulty. The relative lack of confidence displayed by some participants consisted of both non-verbal components – fluctuating levels of accents throughout the conversations – and verbal components – acknowledging a relative deficiency of English language skills compared to their native-born counterparts. Admittedly, the interview context itself could create a level of anxiety in the participants that might influence the level of confidence displayed in the English language. At the same time, it should be noted that the ten who did their interviews in English chose to do so, thus indicating a certain level of confidence in their ability to utilize the English language. The context and atmosphere were also kept consistent across interviews. These two factors alone, therefore, cannot

account for the variability in the level of confidence they displayed with English, both across and within participants, over the course of the interviews.

In addition, the participants also offered suggestions for improvement in the current school system in helping immigrant children with their English proficiency. In particular, current ESL teaching approaches were found to be not sufficiently sensitive to their practical needs. Instead, they would have preferred a more integrative approach where they could practice communication with their English-speaking peers in a face-to-face manner. This finding echoes those of Seat's (2003) study in which immigrant adolescents viewed the teaching techniques used in ESL programs to be both inflexible and inaccessible.

From the participants' conversations, language emerged as the thread that tied many aspects of their experiences together. The three major interactions involving language, as revealed by these participants' experiences, include: (1) the reciprocal relationship between language and peers, (2) the participants' increasing use of English in the family context and the potentially negative effects it has on their family relationships, and (3) using language as a symbol of identity.

Participants described a reciprocal relationship between language and peers. The children's increased English proficiency, which they credited their peers as playing a significant role in, helped these children overcome the initial social isolation caused by the language barrier. This reciprocal relationship has been noted by researchers such as Church (1982) and Ying (1996). The participants also reported increasing use of English in the family context, which can have potentially negative effects on their family relationships and on communication between participants and their parents, who

continued to converse predominantly, if not exclusively, in Chinese. Similar patterns have been observed in studies conducted by Tannenbaum and Howie (2002) and by Wakil, Siddique, and Wakil (1981).

It is not surprising to find language to be closely intertwined with so many areas of these children's adaptation experience. As B. K. Lee and Chen (2000) noted: "Cross-cultural adaptation starts with communication, proceeds in and through communication, and is revealed in host communication competence" (p. 764). Language is both the means and measure of socialization into a culture. The relatively high level of English proficiency that these children have acquired, as demonstrated during the interviews, could therefore be interpreted as evidence of their mastery of the first and perhaps most important step towards successful adaptation. The highly significant impact that both their initial lack of English and the eventual proficiency acquired had on their experience lent further support to the important role that language acquisition has on an immigrant's overall adaptation.

Peers.

Results from this and other studies (Leung, 2001; Swagler & Ellis, 2003; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) indicate connections with peers in the new country as another important element of successful adjustment for immigrant children. All of the participants in this study reported friendships – with both Chinese and non-Chinese peers – that figured prominently in their lives. Furthermore, many of them considered these friendships to be the most important reason for their satisfaction with life in Canada. This result is consistent with Ying's (1996) finding that Chinese immigrants in the United States who had both Chinese and non-Chinese friends were more satisfied with their

immigration experiences than those whose social circles consisted exclusively of Chinese people.

Although all participants appreciated their friendships with both Chinese and non-Chinese peers, most of them also recognized the special kind of support, intimacy, and mutual understanding provided by those peers who shared the same ethnic culture and language background. A similar trend was observed in a few other Canadian studies with immigrant youth (Janzen & Ochocka, 2003; Seat, 2003; Wong, 1999). As Shih (1998) noted, the preference for peers of the same ethnic background, as demonstrated by many immigrant children, could stem from the sense of "psychological proximity" between people who share similar experiences, values, and interests. Furthermore, for the participants in this study, negative emotions on arrival appear to be most directly related to language difficulties. Special bonds to other Chinese immigrant children might have resulted, in part, from helping each other over language difficulties.

Although the participants did not express the same degree of feelings of exclusion and loneliness observed in other studies with immigrant children (Kao, 1999; Kirova, 2001), some of them hinted that immigration had led to a disruption of their friendship patterns. In particular, the older participants experienced a sense of difficulties in joining in established friendship circles. They felt that their newly made friendships were perhaps not as strong as those friendship circles that were already well established years before their arrival. This observation further highlights the critical effects that age on arrival has on many aspects of an immigrant's adaptation.

School.

Overall, the participants in this study reported a very positive assessment of their Canadian school experience. They perceived and embraced the differences in the Canadian school system positively, in comparison to those of the predominantly Confucian educational system in mainland China and Hong Kong, a system often criticized for its authoritarian classroom atmosphere and teacher-student relationships, its instructional methods, and the excessive pressure it puts on students to perform (Ho, 1994). Nevertheless, a few found the school system in Canada to be somewhat chaotic and disorderly compared to what they were used to in their homelands. The first day of school in Canada proved to be a critical point in their journey of adaptation. This day marked a major transitional juncture in which the participants had to simultaneously come face-to-face with the differences in the school system, teachers, and peers, and with the language barrier. Its significance to the participants only underlined the need for families, teachers, and peers to help smooth out this important day for immigrant children.

The importance of educational values and work orientation in Chinese culture has been widely recognized (Chow, 2000; Fuligni, 1997; Huang et al., 2003; Stevenson, Chen, & Lee, 1992; Wang, 1999). Most of the participants also noted the generally higher academic performance and stronger work ethic exhibited by their Chinese peers. Their observation is similar to the findings in other studies. Kao (1999) found that first- and second-generation Chinese origin children in the United States usually outperformed their third- and later-generation and also their Caucasian counterparts in schools, a phenomenon that has yet to be explained by socio-economic status, psychological well-

being, or other school experiences of the children. A similar study by Huntsinger and her colleagues (1998) suggested that, at least in the short term, Chinese-American children's higher academic performance seemed to stem from their parents' more formal and structured approach to academic learning.

Findings from this study, on one hand, seem to support the perpetuation of the model minority stereotype found both among the general population and in the research literature, a stereotype depicting Asian children as academic geniuses (Huang et al., 2003; Kibria, 2002; S. J. Lee, 1996). Although some participants clearly associated being Chinese with academic excellence, the majority, however, rejected the stereotype of Chinese children as "brains" and "whiz kids." While most of the children realized that their parents had high expectations as to their school performance, only a couple of them thought that their teachers held special expectations for them because of their Chinese ethnicity.

From the perspectives of the children, a lack of awareness or acceptance of the stereotype and the expectations that accompany such a stereotype might be viewed as desirable to their development. As S. J. Lee (1996) noted, such a stereotype, as pervasive as it is, only contains seeds of reality and is harmful and limiting to individual growth. The diverse and complex experiences of all who fall under the term "Asian" are hidden by such a stereotype. Such a one-size-fits-all stereotype is also dangerous because it allows our society to neglect the needs of those individuals who are Asian but come from a different background or a different immigrant generation. It is important that society, teachers, and the children themselves do not use this stereotype as a yardstick against which to judge Asian children's achievement.

Family.

Although most children in this study admitted to withholding certain matters and feelings from their parents, none of them viewed explicit conflicts to be a significant issue within their family. This finding stands in contrast to reports in the literature (e.g., Bhadha, 2002; Chiu et al., 1992; Dinh, Sarason, & Sarason, 1994; Farver et al., 2002; Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Zhou, 1997) that intergenerational and intercultural conflicts were more common and more pronounced in immigrant families than in non-immigrant families. There are three possible reasons for the lack of agreement between the results of this study and those of these other studies. First, Chinese children are traditionally socialized to be reserved and to "save face," especially when it comes to disclosing family matters to outsiders. This tradition might have inhibited these children from sharing stories of family conflicts with the researcher. Second, participants might not have been comfortable in sharing family details with the researcher in their family homes, where the majority of the interviews took place, although most interviews took place in a private area.

Third, almost all of the studies in the literature on parent-child conflicts were from the perspective of adolescents. According to Erikson (1968), adolescence is a time when youth struggle with issues of autonomy and separation from parents. The changes in parent-child relationships for adolescents, immigrant and non-immigrant alike, during this time period are thought to be instigated by their growing desire to increase their sense of autonomy and independence (Fuligni, 1998). Many writers, therefore, have argued that adolescent immigrants are at the greatest risk of developing conflicts with their parents (Chun & Akutsu, 2003; R. M. Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000; Mann, 2004; Yau &

Smetana, 1993; Ying, 1999). The present study focused on the perspective of preadolescents, whose family conflicts therefore may not be a salient issue.

Although explicit conflicts did not seem to be a major concern for the children in this study, the potential for conflict exists. When there are inconsistencies between children and their parents in adaptation patterns and when immigrant families experience role reversals, particularly in the language domain, both of which were the case for the participants in this study, conditions are created for family conflict and the loss of parental authority (Beiser et al., 1995; B. K. Lee & Chen, 2000; Pawliuk et al., 1996; Phinney, 1990; Portes & Hao, 2002; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Some participants reported parental disapproval of their increasingly independent and acculturated selves, which could be problematic for these children as they head into the core of adolescence, a period during which identity development is at is most intense.

The subtle nature of the interaction between the participants and their families upholds the image of the traditional Chinese family portrayed in the literature. The dominant aspect of cultural differences noticed by the participants related to parent-child relationships. In particular, participants perceived the parents of their non-Chinese peers to be more intimate with their children and to be more expressive emotionally. This finding is consistent with previous research on the parenting style of Chinese parents (Chao, 1994; Lin & Fu, 1990; Sung, 1985; Tardif, 2003; Tsai & Levenson, 1997). As Wang (1999) noted, traditional Chinese parents seldom express their love for their children verbally, instead expressing their love through the care they provide. A reserved emotional response style represents a more traditional, fundamental Chinese value that is less malleable to change after migration (Herz & Gullone, 1999; Tardif). When

immigrant children compare their family lives with those of the mainstream "Canadian" culture, based on a frame of reference they have acquired from their Canadian peers and from the mass media, they often describe their parents' practices as traditional or inappropriate. This comparison could potentially serve as another source of family conflicts.

The participants also noted the subtle nature of the rules in their own families compared to their non-Chinese counterparts'. Their conversations on the topic suggested that the answer to the concerns raised by one Chinese immigrant mother in Wang's (1999) study – "Here . . . a child asks money from his parents if he does something for his parents. It is ridiculous. In China, we never do that. How come in Canada you speak about money with your parents?" (p. 93) – lies in the cultural differences between the two countries. Chinese parents expect their children to obey and abide by the cultural values, traditions, and lifestyles that are imposed on their children (R. M. Lee & Liu, 2001; Lin & Fu, 1990; Sung, 1985; P. Wu et al., 2002; Yao, 1987). Because of the emphasis placed on the authority of parents and on family harmony, the socialization process of Chinese families stands in sharp contrast to the Western values of individualism traditionally associated with middle-class North American families, which place less priority on compliance and respect (Schneider, 1998; Schneider et al., 1994; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Wang & Ollendick, 2001; Yew, 2002). The reporting of a lack of explicit rules by the participants, therefore, may reflect the internalization of parental expectations as young children are growing up in traditional Chinese families and the undesirability and inappropriateness of challenging parental authority in such contexts.

Overall, it was unclear from the findings that, besides the changes in language use, whether immigration had any major impact on participants' communication patterns with their parents. There is no clear indication on whether interaction with family members increased or decreased after moving to Canada for the participants. It seems that the participants' family lives are much less altered by coming to Canada than their school lives or their lives with their peers.

In summary, this section has provided a profile of these children's adaptation experiences – mainly in the spheres of language, peers, school, and family – which involve learning new social and behavioural skills and a new language, as well as new values, attitudes, beliefs, and practices associated with the new Canadian culture. Along the way, they also faced difficulties, of varying nature and extent, that accompanied their learning and adaptation. The significance of this learning and these difficulties will be discussed next.

Significance of Adaptation

The third group of factors concerns the significance of the participants' adaptation experience. It includes the cultural differences observed, difficulties encountered, and their evaluation of their experiences to date.

Cultural differences.

The observed differences between their homelands and Canada, as reported by the participants, parallel those documented in other studies (Janzen & Ochocka, 2003; Jose et al., 2000; Sung, 1985). These include differences in living in the two countries and differences in their cultures and people. In comparing the two, the participants generally spoke of Canada and Canadians in favorable terms, especially in regard to Canadian

parent-child relationships. At the same time, they continued to value the traditions they brought along with them from Chinese culture. There was a suggestion from some of the participants that their families may be so accustomed to working all the time that they found it difficult, at times, to relax and have fun. The participants also noted that sports and physical exercise are not as popular in the Chinese tradition as in the Canadian. These lifestyle considerations may have important implications for health promotion among Chinese immigrant families.

Of particular interest are the intra-cultural differences, mostly in attitudes and behaviours, that half of the participants noticed between foreign-born and Canadian-born Chinese children. Most of the research studying these two groups of Chinese children in immigrant households focuses on psychological and identity measures. Typically, these studies found foreign-born Chinese children to be more likely to identify with their ethnic background than was the case for those born in North America (Lay & Verkuyten, 1999; Rumbaut, 1994). Less is known about the socialization process of Canadian-born Chinese children who live in immigrant households. As the participants in this study suggested, their Canadian-born counterparts are a special group of children who may be different in many ways from both foreign-born Chinese and Canadian-born non-Chinese children. The participants attributed the differences to the unique environment, which has both Chinese and non-Chinese components, that these children were born into and grew up in. These Canadian-born children are therefore worthy of special research attention.

Difficulties.

All of the children in this study acknowledged the difficulties they had encountered immediately after coming to Canada, including those previously discussed,

as well as varying degrees of homesickness, initial culture shock, and social isolation. Apart from isolated incidents, especially in connection with not knowing the English language, none of them viewed their adaptation to Canadian society to be particularly difficult or stressful. Instead, the participants pointed to the greater degree of difficulties, mostly in the areas of cultural and linguistic adjustments, that their parents had faced, as well as those that their older counterparts would face, in the process of adaptation. Their recognition of their parents' difficulties, in contrast to the relatively smooth adjustment that they themselves had gone through, further affirms the general consensus, in the literature, on the effects of age on adaptation (Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Sam & Berry, 1995; Seat, 2003).

Racism and discrimination.

Only a few of the participants reported racial teasing, and even then only a minimal amount of it, a finding that stands in contrast to the dominant theme of prejudice and discrimination in many studies, both Canadian and foreign. Studies on immigrant children and youth typically reported the experience of racism and bigotry to be a major concern, especially among those who were members of visible minority groups (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2000; Farver et al., 2002; Seat, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Two factors – age of the participants and the setting for this study – may account for the discrepancy in the findings.

As discussed earlier, since age is an important factor in adaptation, it is not uncommon for younger children's behaviours to come to resemble those of their Canadian-born peers to a much greater degree and at a much faster pace. The perception that racism among children may be largely based on differential behaviours, as reported

by some participants in this study, mirrored the concerns voiced by immigrant youth in Desai and Subramanian's (2003) study. The experiences of these immigrant youth suggested that, by speaking differently, dressing differently, and following different social customs, their cultural behaviours make them targets for prejudice and discrimination. In this study, the children's ability to adapt quickly, assuming acculturated behaviours as circumstances require, may have made them less salient targets for discrimination compared to the typically older immigrant children in the aforementioned studies.

One participant in this study also suggested that young children may not hold or manifest racist or discriminatory attitudes the way older children do. Although children, even at the preschool level, make judgements about people based on ethnic and racial categories, it is not necessary that these judgements should result in prejudicial attitudes against ethnic minority children (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). Schools, where the majority of inter-ethnic interactions take place for children, therefore bear the important task of assisting young children in the development of positive perceptions of human diversity. Successfully instilling positive perceptions into young children may be the first step to ending the vicious cycle of racism and discrimination. Indeed, the stories of this study's participants reflect the value that the Alberta school curriculum attaches to diversity, which most likely helped shield them from the negative effects of racist and discriminatory behaviours by their peers.

Furthermore, the likelihood of racism and discrimination may also be a function of development in immigrant children and adolescents themselves. Rumbaut (1999), in his longitudinal study with immigrant children, found that participants reported more

experiences of rejection or unfair treatment as they grew older. Romero and Roberts (1998) also showed that older students are more likely to experience more discrimination than are the younger students. These researchers suggested that the increased reports of racism and discrimination among older children may reflect a growing ethnic awareness as part of the developmental process in immigrant and minority children.

Finally, the setting of this study could potentially explain some of the differences observed. Most studies on immigrant children and youth in Canada, or on immigrant populations in general, take place in large urban cities like Toronto and Vancouver, which have a substantially higher immigrant and ethnic minority make-up than that of Edmonton, where the current study took place. A 1996 Angus Reid poll found that close to half of the respondents thought that the immigration level was "too high" in Canada (Simmons, 1998) and agreed with the statement that "Canada is changing too quickly because of all the minorities we have now" (Moodley, 1998). In particular, there is public concern that there are too many Asian immigrants, whom some Canadians perceive to be a threat (Alladin, 1996). To the best of my knowledge, there is no available research comparing racism levels across different regions in Canada. It is possible that the level of immigrant make-up, especially from non-traditional societies, is positively associated with the level of racism or perceived racism in major urban cities. This perception is supported by the experience of one child in this study, who, having moved from London, Ontario, to Toronto and then to Edmonton, perceived the level of intolerance to be the highest in Toronto due to the multicultural make-up of that city. A cross-national examination of immigrant children's experiences would help clarify the relationship, or the lack thereof, between level of racism/discrimination and the region of settlement.

Evaluation of their experience to date.

Looking back on their experience, all participants perceived their time in Canada to be positive for the most part. They appreciated the opportunity to come to Canada and viewed the difficulties along their journey as part of their adaptation to Canadian life, instead of as obstacles to the process. Interestingly, as positive as the experience of moving to and living in Canada was for them, the participants' commitment to this country varied considerably. Almost as many participants thought they would like to move back to their homelands at some point as wished to continue living in Canada. Age, gender, and length of time in Canada did not have a uniform effect on the children's commitment to their new country. Instead, degree of adaptation and degree of commitment appear to be two separate constructs for these children. On the other hand, an intimate relationship between adaptation and identity emerged from their experiences. This relationship will be discussed in the next section.

Identity

A surprising finding in this study was the significance and complexity of ethnic identity among the participants in this study. For these children, ethnic identity was a multi-dimensional concept that was negotiated in an ongoing manner. Different aspects of their identity carried varying meanings and values for the children. The fluid and dynamic nature of their identity across both time and context also became apparent in the identity-negotiation process.

Ethnic identity is generally defined as the degree to which individuals identify with and derive aspects of their self-concept from their ethnic group (Lay & Verkuyten, 1999; Phinney, 1990; Roysircar-Sodowsky & Maestas, 2000; Sue, Mak, & Sue, 1998).

Although the term is sometimes simply used to refer to one's self-label (Rumbaut, 1994), ethnic identity is generally seen as comprising various aspects, including self-identification, feelings of belongingness and commitment to a group, attitudes toward one's own ethnic group, and ethnic involvement (Phinney; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001).

Components of Ethnic Identity

Self-identification.

The first and most obvious and straightforward component of ethnic identity – self-identification – refers to the ethnic label that one chooses for oneself (Phinney, 1990, 2003). Based on a large survey carried out in the United States, Rumbaut (1994) characterized four main types of ethnic self-identities, both between and within groups, among immigrant children from Asian, Latin American, and Caribbean countries: (1) an ethnicity, immigrant, or national-origin identity, e.g., Chinese; (2) an additive or hyphenated identity, e.g., Chinese-American; (3) an assimilative identity, e.g., American; and (4) a panethnic identity, e.g., Asian. As Rumbaut noted, the first two identifications explicitly identify with the original homeland and immigrant experience, albeit to varying degrees, whereas the last two are identifications based on their experience in the new country.

In this study, all of the participants who were asked to provide a self-identification chose an ethnicity-based or a hyphenated additive identity ("Chinese" or "Chinese-Canadian," respectively). None of them self-identified themselves as "Canadian" or as "Asian." This pattern is consistent with those found in other studies with immigrant children and youth of Asian origin (Ooka, 2002; Rumbaut, 1994).

Researchers have noted that foreign-born children, even if they arrived at an early age, tend to have a self-identification based on, albeit to varying degrees, their culture or country of origin (S. M. Lee, 1998; Phinney, 2003; Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000). The distinct racial differences of immigrant children coming from ethnic minority groups may also prevent them from adopting the assimilative label of "Canadian" or "American" (Kibria, 2000; Tuan, 1998). Comments from the participants in this study support these views. Although they did not perceive their race or physical features to be a salient aspect of either their own or others' perceptions of them, the participants recognized that their physical appearance was what made them different from, and what signalled their ethnicity to, their non-Chinese counterparts.

On the other hand, changes, or anticipated changes, in citizenship did not have a uniform effect on participants' self-identification, which suggests that their sense of ethnic identity is separate from the political-administrative "Canadian" identity as defined by the government. In addition, the ambiguity concerning "Canadian" as an ethnic label may have also weakened the absorbing power of the "Canadian" identity for immigrants and their children (Ooka, 2002). Similarly, the absence of the use of the panethnic label "Asian" in this study adds strength to the argument that such a panethnic label is not as popular among Asian groups as it is for other panethnic groups, such as the Hispanics or the Blacks, reflecting the internal linguistic and cultural diversities among Asian groups in North America (Espiritu, 1992).

Sense of belonging.

Another component of their ethnic identity is the participants' sense of belonging to their own ethnic group. As Phinney (1990, 2003) noted, people may self-identify with

a specific ethnic label when asked to do so and yet may not have a strong and positive sense of belonging to the ethnic group associated with that label. In this study, there seemed to be a positive association between one's ethnic label and one's sense of belonging, in that the participants who chose to identify themselves as Chinese also perceived their ethnicity to be more important and saw themselves, to a greater degree, as members of the ethnic Chinese group.

Attitudes towards one's ethnic group.

The most consistent component of the participants' ethnic identity was their attitude towards the ethnic Chinese group. For the most part, being Chinese was a positive experience for these participants. The messages that individuals perceive about the value or lack of value in identifying with their own ethnic group are essential to the development of a positive sense of self (Alvarez & Helms, 2001). Children who are exposed to negative stereotypes about their own group may hold conflicting or negative feelings about their ethnicity (Phinney, 1989). In particular, research findings suggest a connection between discrimination and ethnic identity (Romero & Roberts, 1998; Rumbaut, 1994). The minimal amount of racist and discriminatory behaviours experienced by the participants might therefore have nurtured the development of positive attitudes towards being Chinese.

Ethnic involvement.

Involvement in the cultural practices and lifestyle of one's ethnic group is the most studied component of ethnic identity. The most commonly used indicators, also applicable to the group of children in this study, include language, friendship, food, and cultural traditions (Phinney, 1990). Many researchers have demonstrated a relationship

between various indicators of people's ethnic involvement and their ethnic identity (see Phinney for a review). By far the most widely studied indicator is language.

The literature has consistently reported a connection between language and the formation and maintenance of ethnic identity (Luo & Wiseman, 2000). This study, however, did not find the usual connection between increased English language proficiency and decreased identification with one's own ethnic origin that was found in other studies with immigrant and minority groups (Florsheim, 1997; Laroche, Kim, Hui, & Tomiuk, 1998; Rumbaut, 1994; Wang, 1999). Instead, although the participants possessed a similar level of proficiency in English, they differed in the level of saliency they attached to the different components of ethnicity. Learning English, as a symbolic act of increasing identification and integration with the mainstream culture, did not necessarily erode the importance of the other components of the participants' ethnic identity.

Findings from this study confirm the complexity, as noted by other researchers (for a review, see Phinney, 1990), of the interrelationships between the various components of one's ethnic identity. The prominence of each of the components also varies as a function of time and context. The fluid and dynamic nature of the participants' ethnic identity will be discussed next.

Fluidity of Identity

The participants' ethnic identity is not a fixed entity and nor are its components described above. Given the constantly changing contexts and the different expectations that each context carries on their behaviours, the participants' ethnic identity should be viewed as a means of negotiation between the different cultural realities in which they

found themselves embedded. The biggest cultural disjuncture for this group of children seems to be between their families and the outside world.

The role of family influence.

Forging an identity is never an easy task, but the task of developing a coherent sense of self is especially complex for immigrants (Anisef, Murphy Kilbride, & Khattar, 2003; Beiser et al., 1995; Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Kibria, 2002; Seat, 2003; Wong, 1999). Consistent with the pattern observed in the above research, immigrant children in this study also found the social environments inside and outside of the family to be culturally different. Among the family messages conveyed to the participants was an emphasis on the importance of maintaining one's cultural heritage. Of potential concern, however, is the varying level of parental support for the participants' efforts towards integrating into the larger society.

The important role that family plays in the healthy development of identity in children has been widely documented (Farver et al., 2002; Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota, & Ocampo, 1993; Rosenthal & Cichello, 1986). When families do not encourage diversity and insist on conformity, children's identity development is inhibited (Berger, 1997; Sam & Berry, 1995). This matter appeared to be the concern for some of the participants whose parents not only expected them to abide by the cultural values, traditions, and lifestyles that were imposed on them, but also expressed active disapproval of their acculturated attitudes and behaviours. If issues concerning cultural dissonance between family members remain unresolved, these children's efforts to develop a healthy sense of ethnic identity may be jeopardized in the long run.

Identities across contexts.

The participants were aware of the dual cultural realities in which they lived, as well as the push-pull between family and society expectations on their cultural orientation. Instead of having to make an either-or choice between a Chinese or a Canadian identity, these children developed the flexibility to construct multiple and shifting identities in response to the multiple subjectivities they faced. The use of compartmentalization as a reconciliation strategy was also reported, with some participants learning to separate their behaviours from their values and beliefs. The dynamic aspect of one's identity as a functional context has been documented in the literature (Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997; S. J. Lee, 1996; Noels & Clément, 1996; Phinney, 1990). The participants' efforts in negotiating their identities worked well for the most part. There were, however, instances where the participants expressed discomfort in dealing with clashes of their multiple identities, especially within the family context. In addition, the restricted opportunity for them to express their multiple identities could also jeopardize their well-being, as it may limit individual growth for the participants during a developmental period of rapid changes.

Identities over time.

For immigrant children, two processes are simultaneously taking place that impact their identity construction – the normal identity development process and acculturation to the new country. Our understanding of changes in identity as part of development over an individual's life span is based on the developmental theory of Erikson (1968). According to Erikson, the formation of identity takes place through a process of personal exploration and commitment that typically occurs during adolescence, resulting in identity

achievement – marked by a commitment in important identity domains – as adults. Many researchers (e.g., Cross, 1991; Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1989, 1993; Sue & Sue, 1990) have developed models of ethnic identity development similar to Erickson's model. Typically, ethnic identity development is viewed as a progression over time in which people explore and make decisions on the salience and role of ethnicity in their lives (Phinney, 1990).

Immigrant children, however, may experience stages of ethnic identity development in a different way or may undergo a different style of identity development as a result of living through stages of adaptation that include varying degrees of involvement with both the old and new cultures (Sue et al., 1998). In their studies with immigrant populations, both Rumbaut (1999) and Goodwin (2003) found that identity development for immigrants appeared to follow a reactive, dialectical pattern rather than progressing in a single line as the models proposed. As Goodwin noted, the stage models are too linear to adequately represent the fluidity of ethnic identity development. Furthermore, the identity models mentioned above were derived mainly from the experiences of American-born adolescents and adults. When these models are used with immigrant populations, researchers run the risk of neglecting the unique factors central to the experience of immigrants and their development and negotiation of ethnic identity.

Identity development is generally thought to begin during adolescence. The very act of immigrating to and adapting to life in a new country, however, could heighten immigrant children's ethnic awareness. This heightened sense of ethnic awareness – a precursor to ethnic identity development (S. J. Lee, 1999) –could possibly promote an early launch of ethnic identity development for immigrant children. The participants in

this study, indeed, showed varying signs and patterns of identity development over their adaptation. Some, accepting their sense of identity in a matter-of-fact manner, seemed relatively unaffected by the process of migration, whereas others experienced the process of exploring, rejecting, and eventually learning to become comfortable with their changing identities during their time in Canada. Still other participants seemed to be just beginning to explore their ethnic identities. As a result, different identity profiles emerged from a group of children who shared many apparent similarities in their adaptation to Canadian society.

Possible gender differences.

Research on gender in relation to ethnic identity has produced largely inconclusive results. Whereas some researchers have found evidence to suggest that identity development is a gendered process (Romero & Roberts, 1998; Rumbaut, 1994; Waters, 1996), others failed to find any gender differences (Nesdale, Rooney, Smith, 1997; Tsang, Irving, Alaggia, Chau, & Benjamin, 2003). A hint of gender differences emerged from the findings in this study suggesting that the boys appeared to have a more stable sense of ethnic identity than the girls did as a whole. Past research has suggested that girls are under greater pressure to retain the culture in traditional families (Desai & Subramanian, 2003; Sharma, 1984). This pressure could be responsible for the greater degree of conflict and ambivalence experienced by the girls both in regard to their sense of identity and with their families. On the other hand, the observed differences could also be explained in terms of developmental differences between boys and girls. In particular, the boys' stable sense of ethnic identity could reflect a relatively unexplored sense of self, whereas the ambivalence exhibited by the girls could be interpreted as evidence of

identity exploration. The lack of research-based information on identity development for this age group precludes a full explanation for the differences observed in the context of this study.

Completing the Picture: Adaptation and Identity Development

The distinction between acculturation and ethnic identity is unclear, with the two constructs often being used interchangeably in the literature (Phinney, 1990; Sue et al., 1998). Phinney and her colleagues (2001) consider acculturation to be a broader construct, however, encompassing a wide range of behaviours, attitudes, and values that change with contact between cultures. Ethnic identity is that aspect of acculturation that focuses on the subjective sense of belonging to a group or culture (Esses & Gardner, 1996; Phinney, 1990). Berry's (1990, 1997) model of acculturation, as presented in the literature review, is therefore a useful starting point for understanding variation in ethnic identity as an aspect of acculturation (Phinney; Phinney et al.). In this light, all the participants in this study can be considered to have an integrated or bicultural identity insofar as they adapted to Canada in necessary ways, such as learning English, while maintaining their immigrant identities.

As Phinney and her colleagues (2001) point out, the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identity is likely to be moderated by a number of additional factors, such as gender, age at time of migration, and generation of immigrant. Furthermore, acculturation and ethnic identity are not an "all or none" issue; people, instead, retain elements of their past, while simultaneously adapting to and absorbing various elements of the new culture in which they find themselves embedded (Beiser, 1999; Berry, 1984; Phinney, 1990; Sue & Sue, 1990). All of the children in this study

possessed the ability and flexibility to draw on resources from both their heritage and the mainstream culture, albeit to varying degrees, in their adaptation and identity negotiation. Their success in adapting to life in Canada and their positive views on the migration process mirror those of the bicultural individuals in other research studies (Berry, 1997; Feliciano, 2001; Gibson, 1988; Lieber et al., 2001; Rotherham-Borus, 1993; Sharir, 2002; Ward et al., 2001; Ying, 1996). This observation may also account for the positive sense of self-esteem reported by the four children included in the follow-up interview who were asked to provide a self-evaluation. This finding is consistent with research generally demonstrating that a strong sense of ethnic identity is positively related to self-esteem or psychological health (Bhadha, 2002; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Nesdale & Mak, 2003; Roberts et al., 1999; Roysircar-Sodowsky & Maestas, 2000; Ying, 1996).

Indeed, these children seemed to have happier and healthier lives than those of their Chinese counterparts in traditional societies, as reflected by having more free time, more opportunities for physical exercise and fun activities, and less stress. Nevertheless, these children may be under more stress than are native-born Canadian children because they are under more pressure, especially from their families, to perform academically and to maintain a coherent sense of self within the dissonant cultural realities in which they find themselves embedded.

In the end, both the processes of acculturation and ethnic identity need to be considered in understanding the adaptation of immigrant children. The participants' stories brought out the complexity of both of these processes, both of which contribute to, in their own right as well as in interaction with one another, their experience of moving to and adapting to a new country as Chinese immigrant children.

Limitations

Drawing on the voices of 11 participants recruited from one geographic region in Canada, this study has attempted to provide an in-depth portrayal of immigrant children's experience. It did not take into account the voices of those Chinese immigrant children living in other regions in Canada, in the United States, or those of second-generation Chinese children with immigrant parents. A more representative sample of Chinese immigrant children would make for a more comprehensive understanding of this group of children.

It is possible that the use of purposive and snowball sampling in this study inadvertently led to a sample that was positively skewed, resulting in a group of relatively well-adjusted participants. In addition, all the participants (and their parents) were volunteers, thereby potentially biasing and limiting the data to those children who were comfortable in sharing their experiences and to children whose parents were comfortable in letting their children participate in the study. Furthermore, the disclosure of negative experiences to outsiders conflicts with the concept of "saving face," a highly valued tradition in the Chinese culture. The participants, therefore, might have been hesitant to share certain aspects of their experiences. The development of a more culturally sensitive research method is much needed in order to resolve these issues in future research with Chinese immigrant children.

As with the use of all self-reports, the use of interviews as the data collection tool runs the risk of subjective bias amongst the participants. As La Greca (1990) pointed out, children may react to the demand characteristics of the interview situation by responding in socially desirable ways. In this study, interview questions were phrased and designed

to minimize the tendency to produce socially desirable responses. Furthermore, given that the purpose of this study was to look at the immigration experience from the perspective of the children themselves, their subjective impressions and unique outlooks are indeed a crucial aspect of this qualitative study.

Researcher bias is another possible limitation in this study. My own experience in adapting to Canadian society as a Chinese child from Hong Kong, coupled with the biases attributable to both my academic learning and my observations of Chinese immigrant children, could have inadvertently distorted the data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The bracketing procedure documented in a previous chapter was specifically intended to minimize any such potential bias.

Implications

Since Canada is one of the world's foremost immigrant-receiving countries, the investigation of immigration-related issues is a significant concern (Beiser, Devins, Dion, Hyman, & Lin, 1997). Health promotion initiatives sensitive to new immigrant children's unique needs are crucial to ensuring the healthy adjustment of these children to Canadian society. The research literature dealing with preadolescent immigrant children is sparse. A better understanding of the factors that promote immigrant children's well-being is much needed. Results of this study suggest the following possible implications for future research and practice:

1. Preadolescent immigrant children have generally been a neglected group in immigrant research. This study highlights the uniqueness of their experiences

relative to those of their adolescent and adult counterparts, thus making this group of children worthy in its own right as a subject for future research and theorizing.

2. The findings of this study not only demonstrate that identity development is a relevant issue for this age group, but also call for a more comprehensive understanding of the precursors to and process of identity development in this age group. Educators, counsellors, and mental health professionals alike need to help immigrant children cope positively with the confusion and conflicts generated by the dissonant cultural realities in which they live. Their identity development process may not only be different from, but may also be more complicated than, that of their non-immigrant counterparts.
3. The scope of the present study is limited to the perspective of the children. In future studies, the perspectives of the parents, teachers, and peers need to be taken into account so as to gain a fuller understanding of the migration process. Objective measures (e.g., developed instruments on acculturation, ethnic identity, and self-esteem) could also provide a yardstick for comparing subjective accounts of experiences.
4. The complex interaction between immigrant children's personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age of arrival) and the environmental and contextual variables of their society of settlement needs to be untangled in order to illuminate the key factors that make adaptation relatively smooth for some and particularly stressful for others. The variance in experiences documented in this study also underlines the importance of exploring differences in children who share the same ethnic background and of avoiding classifying their experiences on a stereotypical basis.

5. To reduce stress among Chinese immigrants, particularly among adult immigrants, the first and foremost strategy should perhaps be to address their language difficulties. The participants' responses suggested that a lack of English language skills may be connected to feelings of loneliness and alienation, with some children becoming isolated and withdrawn as a result, making them at risk for mental health problems. Those immigrants who are less adept with the English language are also more likely to have more difficulties in getting help in matters of health and safety. Access to the mass media (e.g., TV) and to native-speakers of the English language seemed to be effective avenues for learning the English language.
6. Resources need to be provided to help schools more effectively support immigrant children through the adjustment process and to help them to better cope with language difficulties. In particular, the children in this study saw a need for a more practical, communication-based approach to ESL teaching methods.
7. The children's portrayal of their school environment as relatively accepting reflects the success of the Alberta educational curriculum in highlighting the value of cultural diversity among school children. This finding further underlines the importance of education, especially for young children, in countering prejudice and discrimination against newcomers who are of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds in a multicultural society like Canada.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to give voice to the experience of immigrant children, a relatively neglected group in Canada. In the past, the guiding frameworks for research have focused on the negative impact of migration and on older age groups (Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997). While findings from this study confirmed the importance of acknowledging the difficulties involved in an immigrant's adaptation, the deeper significance of these findings may lie in the parallel storyline of the capacity, strength, and resilience demonstrated by these preadolescent immigrant children. The qualitative framework for this study also revealed that learning from the experiences of these children in their own words is every bit as important as learning from their responses to predetermined quantitative categories. An understanding of the elements of their successful adaptation may be key to easing immigrant adaptation in general. The saliency of identity issues in these children also challenges the conception that such issues are to be reserved for the study of adolescents.

The immigrant children in this study demonstrated impressive abilities not only in their successful adaptation to Canadian society, but also in articulating the richness of their views and experiences. Their stories have inspired and enriched me both personally and academically. It is my sincere hope that this exploratory study will invite more research interest in this particular population as well as in their identity negotiation process. An increased understanding of this group of children will help us appreciate and validate their often overlooked efforts to find a meaningful place for themselves in this new country they now call home.

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Appendix A

Child Information Letter and Assent Form – English- and Cantonese-Speaking Children

Dear _____:

My name is Sanchia Lo. I am a student at the University of Alberta.

I am doing a study right now. I want to find out what it is like for children to move to another country. You can help me. You know some of the answers because you moved to Canada when you were small. That is why I want you to be in my study. You can help us learn about children who move to Canada.

We can do the study wherever you would like to. To do the study I will first play a game with you. Then I will ask you some questions. I will tape-record what you tell me. If you don't want some things tape-recorded, we can stop the tape.

If you don't like a question, you don't have to answer it. If a question makes you feel bad, I will ask another question instead. Or we can stop the questions. You can stop by telling me that you would like to stop. Or you can talk to someone who can make you feel better.

I will ask your parents to let you do the study. Please talk this over with them. You can only be in the study if they let you. But your parents will not be in the room when you and I talk.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. After you start, you can stop at any time. Nothing bad will happen to you.

I will put all the kids' stories into a report. Your name will not go with your story. Your name will be kept secret. But if you tell me that someone is hurting you, or hurting another child, then I have to tell the office that protects children. If you plan to hurt yourself, or hurt someone else, I also have to tell.

I will listen to the tapes. My helpers will listen to the tapes. No one else is allowed to hear the tapes except you. If you want to hear the tapes some day, you can. You can come to my office and hear the tapes. The tapes will be kept in a safe place.

While I am writing up the kids' stories, I might want to talk with you again. I might have a question. Or I might want to make sure I understood your story right. But you don't have to talk to me again if you don't want to.

When everything is done, I will write a report. If you want a copy, I will give you one.

If you have any questions, please ask me. Or ask one of my helpers. If you want, you can phone me. My phone number is 430-8327. Or you can call my teacher. Her phone number is 492-9277. You can also talk to someone who is not helping me do this study. Her name is Helen. Her phone number is 492-8661.

Thank you very much.

IF YOU SIGN THIS FORM IT MEANS THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY. IT ALSO MEANS THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD EVERYTHING THAT IS ON THIS FORM. YOU AND YOUR PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM.

_____	_____	_____
Signature of Child	Printed Name	Date
_____	_____	_____
Signature of Investigator	Printed Name	Date

Appendix B

Child Information Letter and Assent Form – Mandarin-Speaking Children

Dear _____:

My name is Sanchia Lo. I am a student at the University of Alberta.

I am doing a study right now. I want to find out what it is like for children to move to another country. You can help me. You know some of the answers because you moved to Canada when you were small. That is why I want you to be in my study. You can help us learn about children who move to Canada.

I have someone who speaks Mandarin to help me do the study. We can do the study wherever you would like to. She will first play a game with you. Then she will ask you some questions. She will tape-record what you tell her. If you don't want some things tape-recorded, she can stop the tape.

If you don't like a question, you don't have to answer it. If a question makes you feel bad, she will ask another question instead. Or she can stop the questions. You can stop by telling her that you would like to stop. Or you can talk to someone who can make you feel better.

If it's OK with you, I'd like to stay in the room. If you'd rather I was not in the room, I can leave.

I will ask your parents to let you do the study. Please talk this over with them. You can only be in the study if they let you. But your parents will not be in the room when you and my helper talk.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. After you start, you can stop at any time. Nothing bad will happen to you.

I will put all the kids' stories into a report. Your name will not go with your story. Your name will be kept secret. But if you tell my helper that someone is hurting you, or hurting another child, then I have to tell the office that protects children. If you plan to hurt yourself, or hurt someone else, I also have to tell.

I will listen to the tapes. My helpers will listen to the tapes. No one else is allowed to hear the tapes except you. If you want to hear the tapes some day, you can. You can come to my office and hear the tapes. The tapes will be kept in a safe place.

While I am writing up the kids' stories, I might want my helper to talk with you again. I might have a question. Or I might want to make sure I understood your story right. But you don't have to talk to my helper again if you don't want to.

When everything is done, I will write a report. If you want a copy, I will give you one. If you have any questions, please ask me. Or ask one of my helpers. If you want, you can phone me. My phone number is 430-8327. Or you can call my teacher. Her name is Berna. Her phone number is 492-9277. You can also talk to someone who is not helping me do this study. Her name is Helen. Her phone number is 492-8661.

Thank you very much.

IF YOU SIGN THIS FORM IT MEANS THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY. IT ALSO MEANS THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD EVERYTHING THAT IS ON THIS FORM. YOU AND YOUR PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM.

_____	_____	_____
Signature of Child	Printed Name	Date

_____	_____	_____
Signature of Investigator	Printed Name	Date

Appendix C

Parental Information Letter

Title of the Project: The Experience of Chinese Immigrant Children

Principle Investigator: Sanchia Lo
Centre for Health Promotion Studies, University of Alberta

Co-Investigator / Supervisor : Dr. Berna Skrypnek
Department of Human Ecology, University of Alberta

Contact Information: Phone: 430-8327
Email: sslo@ualberta.ca

Dear Parents,

My name is Sanchia Lo. I am a graduate student in Health Promotion Studies at the University of Alberta. I am doing a research study about the experiences of Chinese immigrant children in Canada. I would like to get your permission to have your child take part in my study. To help you make an informed decision whether to allow your child to participate, I would like to tell you a little bit about my study.

Purpose/Background:

The purpose of this study is to explore the adaptation experiences of Chinese immigrant children. Researchers do not know much about the immigration experiences of children, especially the perspectives of children between the ages of nine and thirteen.

We would like your child to share his or her thoughts, feelings, and personal stories about his or her immigration experience. This will help improve our understanding of this group of children.

Procedures:

This study will consist of interviews with Chinese immigrant children. Each child will be interviewed once or twice. The interview will take approximately one hour. The interview can be conducted in English, Mandarin, or Cantonese, whichever your child prefers. The interviews will be conducted in a mutually agreed upon private setting where

only your child and myself will be present, except in the case where the language of choice is Mandarin, in which case the research assistant will also be present.
All interviews will be tape-recorded. However, your child can have the tape-recorder turned off at any time. Your child may refuse to answer any or all questions. Your child can also stop the interview at any time. Approximately one to two weeks after the first interview, your child may be asked back for a follow-up interview as needed. Again, this will be voluntary.

Benefits:

As a result of participating in this study:

- Your child can help us learn more about immigrant children in Canada.
- You will have a chance to look at the final results of this study. This will give you a better understanding of immigrant children.
- Your child will receive a gift certificate at the end of the interview.

Risks:

There are no known risks to participating in the study. It is possible that your child may become upset in answering some of the questions. If that happens, I will either skip to the next question or end the interview. If your child desires, he/she can speak to a counselor.

Privacy and Confidentiality:

All information will be held confidential (or private), except when professional codes of ethics or legislation (or the law) requires reporting. Only your child and the researchers directly involved in the study will have access to the tapes of your child's interview The tapes will be transcribed, but your child's name and any identifying information will not be included in the transcript.

The law requires that we report any disclosure of child abuse to Children's Services. Similarly, any evidence of self-harm or of potential of self-harm will be reported to you and to school counselors.

The information your child provides will be kept for at least five years after the study is done. The information will be kept in a secure area (i.e., locked filing cabinet in a locked office). Your child's name or any other identifying information will not be attached to the information that he/she gave. Your child's name and any other identifying information will also never be used in any presentations or publications of the study results.

If you wish, you may receive a copy of the final report at the end of the study.

Use of Your Child's Information:

This study is being done for a Master's thesis. Findings from this study will appear in my Master's thesis. The researchers also plan to publish this study's findings in academic journals and/or present the findings at conferences.

It is possible that the information gathered for this study may be looked at again in future research projects to help us answer other study questions. If so, the ethics board will first review the study to ensure the information is used ethically.

Freedom to Withdraw:

Your child's participation is voluntary. Only children who have parental permission and who themselves agree to participate will be involved in the study. Both you and your child may withdraw your permission at any time during the study without any consequences. All children will receive a gift certificate even if they withdraw from the study.

Additional Contacts:

If you have any additional concerns about any part of this study, please contact Dr. Berna Skrypnek at the Department of Human Ecology, University of Alberta, at 492-9277. If you wish to talk to someone not involved in this study, you may contact Dr. Helen Madill at the Centre for Health Promotion Studies, University of Alberta, at 492-8661.

Thank you for your interest in having your child take part in this research. Your support for this project is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Sanchia Lo

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD EVERYTHING THAT IS ON THIS INFORMATION LETTER.

_____ _____

Parent's Initials Date

Appendix D

Parental Consent Form

Title of the Project: The Experience of Chinese Immigrant Children

Part 1: Researcher Information

Name of Principal Investigator: Sanchia Lo
Affiliation: Centre for Health Promotion Studies, University of Alberta
Contact Information: Phone: 430-8327 or email: sslo@ualberta.ca

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Berna Skrypnek
Affiliation: Department of Human Ecology, University of Alberta
Contact Information: Phone: 492-9277 or email: berna.skrypnek@ualberta.ca

Part 2: Consent of Subject

	Yes	No
Do you understand that your child has been asked to be in a research study?		
Have you read and received a copy of the attached information sheet?		
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this research study?		
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study?		
Do you understand that your child is free to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time? Your child does not have to give a reason and there will be no consequences.		
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you?		
Do you understand who will have access to your child's interview data?		
Do we have your permission to use your child's data for Sanchia Lo's master's thesis, conference presentations and publications?		
Do you understand that the information gathered for this study could be used in research projects in the future (further ethical approval will first be obtained)?		
Do you consent to the information gathered in this study to be used in research projects in the future?		
Would you like a copy of the final report?		

Part 3: Signatures

This study was explained to me by: _____

Date: _____

I agree to permit my child, _____, to take part in this study.

Signature of Parent: _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature of Witness (if available): _____

Printed Name: _____

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to let his/her child participate.

Signature of Researcher: _____

Printed Name: _____

* A copy of this consent form must be given to the subject.

Appendix E

Interview Guide

1. How old are you?
   What grade are you in?
   Do you have any brothers or sisters? How old are they?

2. What country were you born in? How old were you when you moved to Canada? What do you remember best about *country of origin*? Can you describe to me some of the thing you remember best about the time before you came to Canada? Why are those memories so special?

3. Can you tell me what it was like for you to move to Canada?
   How did you feel about moving to Canada?
   - Was moving to Canada a happy or sad thing? Why?
   - Was it exciting or scary, or both? Why?

   What is good about living in Canada? What is bad about living in Canada? Why?
   If you could, would you like to move back to *country of origin*? Why or why not?

4. How are your family relationships now as compared to the way they were back in *country of origin* in terms of:
   - How you get along with your parents
   - How you talk with your parents
   - How much you talk with your parents
   - How open and honest you are with your parents
   - Understanding

   4a. Do you tell your parents everything? Do you hide your feelings from your parents? If you're angry or sad, do you tell your parents?

   4b. Do you feel that your parents ask for your help more in Canada? Examples? Have your responsibilities (or things you have to do) changed since you came to Canada?

   4c. What do you do for fun? What does your family do together for fun? Are they different from what you used to do when you were in *country of origin*?

   4d. What are the rules within the family? Are they different now than before? If these rules are broken, what happens?

5. Can you describe how your family relationships are the same or different from those of your friends? From your Chinese friends in Canada? From your other Canadian friends?
    - Is it a good thing or a bad thing that it is different in your family? Why?
    - How does that make you feel?

6. How do you feel about your friends in Canada? Are they different from the friends that you had back in *country of origin*? How are they different? Have your friends changed, or have they changed the way they treat you, from when you first moved to Canada? How?

7. Do you feel that other children treat you differently because you come from another country? Because you are Chinese?

8. Do your parents have any expectations on how you do in school? What about yourself?

9. Do you feel that your teachers' expectations are different for you because you're Chinese?

    If yes: What about other immigrant kids who are not Chinese?

10. Do you feel that you are different from your friends? In what ways?

11. What was the hardest thing about living in a new country? Is there something that could have been done to make your life in Canada easier and happier?

12. What is the happiest thing that has happened to you since you moved to Canada? Why?

Appendix F

Interview Guide for Follow-Up Interviews

1. What expectations did you have before you came? Were they fulfilled?
   - Any surprises?
2. What was your first impression of Canada?
3. Last time we talked about how Canadian people and Chinese people are different general. How are Canadian children and Chinese children different?
4. How's school different here compared to school in *country of origin*?
5. Can you tell me about your first day of school in Canada?
6. Do you notice any differences between the Chinese kids and the non-Chinese kids in your class? Can you tell me about them?
7. What does it mean to you to be a Chinese kid in Canada?
8. How does that make you feel?
9. Do you think other children think that you look different because of how Chinese people look?
10. The fact that Chinese look different from people from other cultures, is that an important part of being Chinese to you?
11. Does looking Chinese make you feel Chinese?
12. What does it mean to be Canadian?
13. Do you live by or follow the Canadian way of life?
14. Have you changed since you came to Canada?
    - In what ways?
    - What language do you use with your parents / closest friends?
    - Family reactions?
15. How do you balance being Chinese and being Canadian?
16. What do you think most describes you, if someone asked you what you are, what would you tell them?

17. How important is it to you to keep the Chinese culture in you?
    - To your parents?

18. Is your family becoming more Canadian? In what ways?

19. Do you think most Canadians have a good image of people who are Chinese?

20. Can you relax and be yourself when you're with Canadians?

21. Do you think that Chinese kids who were born in Canada are different from Chinese kids who came to Canada from another country? How?

22. Who has more rules, a Chinese or a non-Chinese family?

23. Can you describe to me any differences between a traditional Chinese and Canadian family?

24. Some of the children that I interviewed mentioned being teased. While other children said that nobody ever teased them. What about yourself?

25. Has your self-esteem, or how good you feel about yourself, changed since you moved? Do you think your self-esteem is higher/lower than or same as most kids?

26. Does being Chinese help you have more confidence in yourself?

27. Was adapting to life in Canada easy or hard for you?

28. Was moving harder for your parents or for you?

29. Were there days when you wanted to go back to *country of origin*?
    - What were those days like?

30. How would you describe your experience here in Canada so far? What has been your worst experience? Your best?

Appendix G

Confidentiality Agreement

Project Title: The Experience of Chinese Immigrant Children

I will be conducting my interviews for my research project with Chinese immigrant children from November, 2003 to March, 2004. During this time you will be listening to audiotapes and transcribing data from those tapes, and/or translating the transcripts. By signing this form you are agreeing to keep all information confidential. Thank you for your agreement.

Sanchia Lo

I agree to keep all information shared with me confidential.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature of Research Assistant	Date	Witness	Date
_____		_____	
Printed Name		Printed Name	